

# 現実主義勇者の

# 王国再建記

Re:CONSTRUCTION  
THE ELFRIEDEN KINGDOM  
TALES OF REALISTIC BRAVE

OVERLAP



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# **Genjitsushugisha no Oukokukaizouki**

## **Vol.3 - Postwar Arc**

**by Dojyomaru**

Info: [Novel Updates](#)







マリア

Maria Euphoria



「魔王を倒す者」でも「天下を統べる者」でもなく、  
『時代の変革を導く者』なのよ」

ジャンヌ

Jeanne Euphoria



# 現実主義勇者の 王国再建記

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# Chapter 00 – Holy Maiden of the Empire

«TN: So the title was changed for the LN version, the original syosetu page (with the old title) had already been taken down sometime ago, the author's new posts in pixiv uses the new title(-ish), and Yukkuri had also started posting translations under the new title as well. So I figured I should follow suit and use the new title, too»

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[Grand Chaos Empire]. It was a great empire that was without equal among the countries of the continent in terms of population, war strength, technology, and the prosperity of its people. Even compared to the second largest one in total area excepting the Demon Lord Territory, Elfrieden, it was a country that the Empire could blow away at will. If Elfrieden were to think of waging war against the Empire, it would require two to three times the national power it had even if it annexed the entirety of the Principality of Amidonia (as of now, it was only occupying the capital). Indeed, these figures only took into account the case of fighting the Empire on its own; if it were to make enemies of the Empire's allies as well, it would no doubt lose its place in the continent.

Probably the only thing in which the Grand Chaos Empire was inferior to Elfrieden would be the length its history, for the Empire was a slight bit younger than Elfrieden. In the twilight hours of the [Chaotic Period] where the various races of the continent would fight each other, where countries would suddenly rise up to power, Elfrieden built up a united country of various races. On the other hand, the [Chaos Kingdom] of the time built up what is called a dictatorship, where rule was centralized under a single king and power was concentrated in the hands of humans.

In turbulent times, it was centralized countries like this that were the stronger. Because the decisions were made by one man and can be immediately applied, it was able to respond to situations more swiftly than other countries could. As the Chaotic Period came to a close, the Chaos Kingdom was a head above the rest of the countries, but was still only one of the forces competing for power, and nobody of the time would imagine that it would be the great empire that it was today. The great change is said to have begun about a hundred years ago, when

a hero was born in the Chaos Kingdom.

Manus Chaos. The man who would later be called [Chaos Emperor]. Manus at the time was born as the second son of the King of Chaos Kingdom, but he inherited the throne when the King and first son was killed in action in a war with the Euphoria Kingdom to its northwest. When Manus took the throne, everyone expected a return match against the Euphoria Kingdom, but Manus did not do so. Far from it, he instead took a daughter of the King of Euphoria as his wife, and established familial relations with it. He even changed his name to Manus Euphoria, completely lowering their guard with regards to the Euphoria Kingdom.

Not a few rebellions occurred within the Chaos Kingdom due to this, but Manus was a prodigy in military matters and suppressed each and every one of them. Yes, the military prodigy Manus understood that there wasn't a great difference in national power with the Euphoria Kingdom at the time. If they were to go into war, it would only serve to exhaust the country. Which means that the plan was to 'first use Euphoria to swallow up the various small countries and once the country had a firm lead in power, turn around and swallow up Euphoria'.

In truth, Manus did turn and attack his wife's parents' home of Euphoria immediately after he swallowed up the small countries and gained a lead in power. However, he might have had a guilty conscience and even after the Euphoria Kingdom fell, he did not restore the Chaos family name and continued to use the Euphoria name<sup>1</sup>. After the fall of the Euphoria Kingdom, Manus continued his aggressive wars and before long had become a large country controlling the western part of the continent. From this moment on, the Chaos Kingdom had been named [Grand Chaos Empire].

<sup>1</sup> The Royal Family of Grand Chaos continue to bear the name Euphoria even today

The appearance of such a large nation shook not only the countries adjacent to the Empire. This is a story of later times, but one of the reasons for Elfrieden's expansionist policies under the antepenultimate King was due to anxiety towards the coming threat of the Empire. The world had already progressed towards cooperation, but before the threat that is the Empire comes, it would

not do but to strengthen one's own country. However, not having Soma's ability, the antepenultimate King, upon taking possession of half of what was the Amidonia Kingdom's territory, was stabbed to death by one of his retainers because of the suffering caused by the impoverishment brought forth by the unreasonable expansionism. Afterwards, the Royal Family fought among themselves for the right to the crown<sup>2</sup> and came to a near annihilation. In the end, Liscia's mother, still a young girl at the time, survived by avoiding the whole ordeal, and inherited the throne. By taking the mediocre Alberto as husband, she somewhat calmed the country down.

<sup>2</sup> The Three Dukes of that time did not want to intervene in the fighting and confined themselves in their territories

To return to the Empire, though it had the vision of uniting the continent after having gained great power, the crucial Manus had died at the age of fifty, still a man able to move. There were theories about him being assassinated, but the truth was that he fell ill. Even heroes could not win against disease. After Manus passed away, the Empire's situation became doubtful. It often happens even on Earth that a country built by a person with strong character would collapse once that person was gone. Alexander's Empire, the Mongol Empire, Qin China ... Empires that had sprung up too quickly and didn't even last three generations before falling apart. Grand Chaos was no different.

The second Emperor, due in part to Manus' close associates still being alive, held a steady reign. By the time of the third Emperor, however, those associates had already left the mortal coil; being a human superiority nation, they did not have vassals of other races that could support several generations of rulers like Ecksel. Because of that, the third Emperor waged aggressive wars in order to win the support of his vassals, showing to those both inside and outside the Empire that he was to inherit Manus' project of uniting the continent.

However, this war that happened some sixty years ago grew into the scale of a global war, bringing many countries to ruin. To that, the Empire was no exception, the war expenditures that went higher than expected impoverished the country and conversely caused the Emperor to lose support. Revolts became a frequent occurrence in the Empire, and during one of those, the third Emperor fell into the hands of bandits and died. The damage caused by the third Emperor



wanting to inherit the project of uniting the continent has been cynically said to have instead shifted the world toward the path of cooperation.

The fourth Emperor who inherited the throne of the troubled Empire abandoned the path of unification and concentrated his efforts on domestic affairs. It was said to have been a wise move, but this time, he received disdain from the princes for being too conservative. By the time of the fifth Emperor, the Empire had already lost its unifying power and was considered on the verge of breaking up in the near future.

However about ten years ago, the most unexpected thing happened: the emergence of the [Demon King Territory]. The Empire lost much of its northern territories to the onslaught of the grotesque hosts, including the former Euphoria Kingdom. The same, however, can be said about other countries; this situation called for the human side to unite. The task of being the leader was sought of the largest and the most militarily powerful Empire. As a result, the Empire was able to avoid dissolution.

Even after the Empire had become the leader of the human side, they were forced to fight hard by the Demon King Army, in part due to the fact the human side still hadn't gotten their acts together. The fifth Emperor was a literary man who does not excel in matters of war. The unfamiliar battlefield wore away into his body and mind and as a result, he passed away from this world five years ago. The fifth Emperor had no sons, and the throne fell to a then fourteen year old young girl.

Maria Euphoria. Currently nineteen years old, she was the current Empress<sup>3</sup> of the Grand Chaos Empire. There were many who had misgivings on handing the throne to the young girl she was then, but after she was enthroned, she exhibited a natural charisma. First of all, she changed the human-centric policies of the Empire and began appointing talented people of other races to posts. If it were peacetime, there would be opposition from the humans, but it was now a state of emergency due to the threat of the Demon King Army. Rank and honor are things one can hold if one were alive, and her policies that was well suited to the spirit of the time received support from the people.

<sup>3</sup> The title of Emperor was reserved to males, so a new one had to be instituted

Among the policies Maria instituted, among the greatest was the advocacy of



the [Declaration of Humanity’s Coalition against Demonkind], or the “Humanity Declaration” for short. It was a call for a common front for the whole of humanity against the oncoming threat of the Demon King Army. With the three main points of [To allow no change in borders due to wars or military operations between humans], [To respect the rights to equality and self-determination of all peoples within all nations], and [For countries far from the Demon King Territory to support the bulwarks that are the countries near the Territory], the Humanity Declaration was a groundbreaking declaration that not only created a [Common Front against the Demon King Army], but also a [Cessation of wars] and [Prohibition of ethnic discrimination].

Also, Maria devoted herself to salvation of those in need, her beautiful visage and gentle heart that touched all peoples rich and poor won over the hearts of the people, and somewhere along the way earned her the appellation [Holy Maiden of the Empire]



That Holy Maiden of the Empire was now slouching despondently in her room in the Imperial Capital [Valois]. It was nighttime, The young girl Maria with a feminine body line wrapped in a white dress and fluttering wavy golden hair was loitering by the window where the moonlight filtered into the unlit room, looking wistfully outside. Nobody would believe she stood at the top of the world’s most powerful country in her current state. As she looked at the brightly shining moon outside the window, she breathed another sigh.

Right that moment, the door to the room was knocked. Maria straightened herself up and said, “come in”.

“Excuse me”

A lone girl opened the door and entered, clad in military uniform. Her face was the spitting image of Maria, the only difference being that her long hair was tied up in a ponytail and that she had a more gallant look in her eyes. Little wonder, for she was Maria’s two years younger little sister Jeanne Euphoria. Jeanne stood up straight before her sister and did a sharp bow.

“Jeanne Euphoria, as the Army Commander-in-Chief, will be heading to the capital of the Principality of Amidonia, Vannes as of now”

Jeanne reported. She possessed the talent that earned her the nickname of the “She-Manus”, and was currently the first in line to the Imperial Throne, and also the commander-in-chief who commands the entire army. By dividing the work – administrative affairs for Maria and military ones for Jeanne – the sisters managed the imperial business that caused the previous Emperor to collapse from overwork. Incidentally, they had a younger sister after Jeanne, but because of rumors of her being a strange eccentric, she doesn’t appear in public. Jeanne said to Maria apologetically.

“I see ... You’re going to meet with the hero, right”  
“... yes. I don’t like it that we’re being used by the Amidonians, but we have to negotiate the return of Vannes that’s currently under occupation”

Jeanne grimaced like she just bit a sour bug. Several days ago an envoy came from Amidonia’s ‘Prince’ Julius. They stated matter-of-factly:

[Elfrieden’s occupation of Vannes is a challenge against the signatory nations of the Humanity Declaration that banned the changing of national borders. We ask Her Highness Maria Euphoria as the leader to somehow take back Vannes from them]

Of course, the Empire already knew that it was the Principality of Amidonia that started the whole thing. When inquired as such, the envoy defiantly gave the excuse of “that was the previous Prince Gaius acting on his own and not listening to the Prince Julius when he remonstrated him. His Highness Julius had nothing to do with it”. Jeanne wanted to pull her sword out hearing their tone of voice, but as the representative of the Imperial military, she restrained herself and bore with it. That was how she unwillingly became responsible for the negotiations.

Though the fault lies with the Principality, she had to uphold the Humanity Declaration, because the Humanity Declaration is the Empire’s dignity itself. This was a most mortifying decision for Maria.

“I’m sorry, I made you uneasy”  
“What are you saying? You’re the one who’s grieving the most, Elder Sis. We’ll certainly make Julius Amidonia pay for this”

Sensing Jeanne spitting out her real feelings, Maria tried talking her down as

calmly as possible.

“I think it’s going to be fine. Elfrieden’s new King Soma is a wise man from what I hear. I can’t think of him being so foolish as to wage war against our country”

“Is that so? We did demand his person once before, though ...”

“True ... we might’ve left a bad impression on him”

About half a year ago, the Empire delivered a demand to Elfrieden for [anti demon war support money], and if they can’t, an additional clause was added that said [use the hero summoning ritual handed down in the Kingdom of Elfrieden and transfer control of him to us]. In the end, Elfrieden in its stringent financial situation chose to summon the hero. The hero Soma Kazuya that they summoned is now the King of Elfrieden. There were many unclear points such as why the previous King Alberto so easily handed the throne over to him, but Soma restored Elfrieden’s financial situation and delivered the [Support Money].

After that, King Soma would settle their food problems, purge the rebellious Three Dukes, and invaded back the Principality of Amidonia that used the gap to invade them, and occupied their capital Vannes. He was a young man who was about the same as Maria in age but was able to do this in such a short time. He was an outstanding talent she would’ve wanted even if he weren’t a hero. In truth, rather than Julius who just did whatever he likes, she would rather tie a bond of friendship with King Soma, but because of the prior incident of the Empire demanding his person, friendly relations seemed hopeless. “However,” Maria said, not abandoning her hope.

“Based on what I hear, I think Lord Soma is a person who would listen to reason”

“Really? I think that you and him would get along like oil and water, though, Elder Sis ...”

Jeanne, however, contradicted her opinion. Through all the reports that she heard about Soma, she can’t help but feel that he would be Maria’s opponent in the game. If in the face of the Demon Race invasion, Maria would call for humanity to band together, Soma would’ve thought to make his own country stand on their own two feet. Also, where Maria would respect the laws and conventions even in hard times, conducting things with empress-like reasoning,

and be rendered immobile, Soma would consider royal authority, Three Dukes, laws, and conventions as mere tools and select them based on his sensibilities of “if it can be used I’ll use it, if not I’ll throw it away”.

Maria who moves on reasoning and Soma who moves on senses<sup>4</sup>. In other words, the idealist Maria and realist Soma<sup>5</sup>. Jeanne thought that the two could never possibly understand each other.

<sup>4</sup> «TN: *i.e.* Maria does things based on how she thinks they should be, while Soma does so based on how he sees things are»

<sup>5</sup> In this case, the moral philosophical term *naturalism* is more pertinent, but to distinguish them would make things unnecessarily obscure so I made it *realism* to match its counterpart *idealism*.

“I think the two of you would be facing in the exact opposite directions ...”

So Jeanne said. Maria had a blank look for a moment but then smiled.

“My, if we’re both looking in opposite directions, then that means we won’t have any blind spots, doesn’t it?”

Saying that with an impish smile, Maria looked sweet even to her sister Jeanne.



## Chapter 01 – Project Lorelei A

Several days after the series of battles.: Inside the military affairs room in Van's Castle, the map of the surrounding area was unfolded atop the big table, while Liecia, Ludwin, temporary Army Supreme Commander Glaive, Hakuya – who had returned after finishing with the affairs at Crimson Dragon Castle Town, and I were looking at the map's pictures. Looking at the map, the Kingdom has only gained control of the enemy's capital 『Van』 and the surrounding areas, so the Kingdom's northwest border has only shifted west a little. Any land outside of this area was still currently the territory of the Amidonia Dukedom. I then inquired to Ludwin.

「Has there been any counteroffensive movements from the Amidonia Dukedom's side?」(Souma)

「.....Nothing Your Majesty, there are no conspicuous movements.」(Ludwin)

After replying, Ludwin placed several small pieces on the towns surrounding 『Van』 that were still in Amidonian hands. This might be the current Amidonian Army's deployment positions.

「Please look at this, they stopped at these positions and only strengthened the defense of the towns that are surrounding Van. Perhaps the damage they suffered in the last battle was so severe, that they gave up recapturing Van though their own power.....」(Ludwin)

「So they are waiting for the Empire's Army's arrival, huh?」(Souma)

Next, I sent my line of sight towards Hakuya.

「By the way, how much is the war potential difference between the Empire

and the Kingdom?」(Souma)

「They surpass our country's national power, population, number of soldiers, technology and wealth. If we only count the number of soldiers, they have five times more men than us. If the amount of equipments is factored into the calculation, then bam! Their power will increase twice further.」(Hakuya)

「Increase Bam! Furthermore twice! Isn't this Quiz Derby?[1]」(Souma)

「? What do you mean?」(Hakuya)

「..... No, it's nothing. I understand that they are a country we must not turn into an opponent. We were somehow able to do something about this upuntil now, but it will be necessary to think about what to do from now on.」(Souma)

I shrugged and Glaive let out a sigh.

「Fuh, how regrettable. Even though it is possible for us to seize all of Amidonia right now.」(Glaive)

「Is that so? I don't really want them though.」(Souma)

I sat on my chair and rested my chin on my hand.[2]

「Although this country has many abundant mining resources, it is too poor. Our country has also only just now been saved from the food shortage. At any rate, we could manage if it was only this town and its surroundings, but we don't have any leftover resource to support the entirety of Amidonia. On the other hand, it would draw unnecessary enmity if we only seized the mines.」(Souma)

Well, if the Empire was coming, then either option would be the same. No matter how much effort we made or territory we snatched, when the Empire shows up, we cannot help but to return our spoils. It would be the same with this city, Van.

「Furthermore, the hate towards Elfrieden in Amidonia is too deep. It seems that this ideology has been indoctrinated for many generations. Even with a military occupation, it would be hard to rule this land safely.」[3](Souma)

「That's true..... We had managed it up until now since there is a large army here, but assuming that we place a governor later to govern this land, the populace probably wouldn't abide by his rule.」(Liscia)

I nodded at what Liscia had pointed out.

「Yeah. That's why I plan to "tame" that resentment first.」(Souma)

「Taming the resentment?」(Liscia)

「Yes. I have already summoned the talented person for that purpose.」  
(Souma)

Then, there was a knocking sound from the door of the military affairs room. I said, 「Enter」and then a blue-haired beauty entered the room after saying, 「Excuse me」. Today, she didn't wear her usual songstress attire of the Café Lorelei, but the white Naval uniform that gave her an appearance of a military officer. The blue-haired beauty stood in front of me and instead of a firm salute she gave an elegant bow.

「Navy Grand Admiral Excel's subordinate, Juna Doma, has arrived to answer Your Majesty's summons.」(Juna)

「Well-well, Juna-san. Thank you for coming. Your appearance in uniform is fabulous.」(Souma)

「To show such a disgraceful appearance for Your Majesty to see, I feel the utmost shame.」(Juna)

「No-no, rather I would like you to show more of your various other sides.」  
(Souma)

「Oh my, Your Majesty, that is quite a smooth way of talking.」(Juna)

「Hahaha」(Souma)

「Fufufu」(Juna)

「.....Geez. Both of you never tire of doing this.....」(Liscia)

We did our usual exchange of words and Liscia glared at us with cold eyes. Yeah, well, it's the cliché. It might be disliked by Liscia, but I found my polite lip service exchange with Juna-san to be quite enjoyable. How should I say it, but to be gently admonished by an adult lady is somewhat pleasant. Our age doesn't even differ by one year, though.

「If Juna-san doesn't object to it, then I could continue this indefinitely.」  
(Souma)

「Yes. Forever.」(Juna)

「.....I wonder why? But I feel really irritated when seeing both of you like this.」  
(Liscia)

So-somehow, I saw an unusual aura from Liscia for the first time, so let's continue the serious talk, since I didn't call Juna-san from the southern area just to exchange words like that. Juna-san showed a smile when she saw Liscia and my situation. Juna-san is very mature..... well, of course she is.

「\*cough\* What I want to say is that I have summoned Juna-san. Then, t-」  
(Souma)

「To be a feast for Souma's eyes?」(Liscia)

「Stop teasing me. Of course it's not for that reason.」(Souma)

「Humph.」(Liscia)



Liscia abruptly turned her face away. Ah..... I made her completely angry. Everyone other than Juna-san made a wry smile. After this, I need to do a proper patching up ..... Well, compared to how she acted in the beginning, seeing her properly behave like a teenage girl of her age, made me a bit happy inside.

「Well, anyway, the reason why Juna-san had been summoned is to put the plan that I had made to practice.」(Souma)

「Plan?」(Liscia)

When Liscia asked me, I answered with full confidence.

「Yes. I call it 『Project Lorelei』」(Souma)



We moved from the office room to the throne room, where three women were already kneeling in waiting. The three women were of different races, appearances and ages. One was an elf with dark brown hair. One was a girl with a lovely and cute appearance. One was a slender cat-eared beastkin girl. The three of them had looks that can only be described as beautiful (bijo and bishoujo). After seeing me sit down at the throne, Juna-san began to introduce them.

「As per Your Majesty's desires, I have brought along the talented people.」  
(Juna)

I said, 「There is no need to act too formal. Please be at ease.」, and the four women stood up and bowed, 「「「Thank you very much」」」. At that moment, Liscia who stood beside me showed a “nice smile” towards me.[4]

「Nee-nee[5], Souma?」(Liscia)

「Wh-, what is it?」(Souma)

「Don't tell me that because you were in a good mood after 『Van』 capitulated, you thought to have “kyakya-ufufu” with girls waiting upon you, right?」(Liscia)

Crap. Her face was smiling, but her heart was completely not smiling at all.

「That's wrong! These girls were only summoned because they are essential for the plan this time!」

「HU~MPH.....」[6](Liscia)

「I mean, you had said that you would permit 8 people before, right?」(Souma)

「I really did say that, but you know..... If it's Aisha and the others, I won't mind, but this conduct of gathering beautiful women like this using your authority is too much, you see.....」(Liscia)

「That's why I have been saying that that's wrong. You know about the Talent Gathering where I said 『If you have talent then I will use you!』 from before, right?」(Souma)

During that Talent Gathering, the ones who received grand positions were only five people, but behind them, there were many people who received their appointments and the country made a list of them and published it. For example, the people with great arithmetic talents were employed as bureaucrats. The one from the turtleman race (average lifespan of 800 years) who had said, 『I have read books from as far back as hundreds of years ago. I won't lose to anyone in the knowledge of literature』 had been appointed as the future chief librarian of the new city currently under construction.

Furthermore, even if they participated in the competition and lost to people of

different or of similar talents, as long as they really do have the talent, then I will appoint them. For example, the winner of the battle competition,『Kingdom's Number One Martial Arts Tournament[7]』, was Aisha, but if there were those with talent amongst the people who had been defeated by her, then they were invited into the Royal Army's Honor Guard under my direct command. But then, the Honor Guard at that time was just seen as decoration corps, so the number of people who actually responded to the invitation was small.....

Then, the girls who were assembled in this place were those who had been defeated by Juna-san in the entertainment contest,『Kingdom of Talent』[8] and the beauty contest, 『Elfrieden Beautiful Girl Grand Prix』[9] and had been confirmed to possess talents in singing and beauty.

「After that Talent Gathering, I scouted these girls through Juna-san. Now then, don't you remember the discussion on how I wanted to make an entertainment program using the Royal Broadcast?」(Souma)

「Ah..... Yeah, you did say something like that.」(Liscia)

Liscia seemed to remember it. Now that she had finally dropped her sharp attitude, I could at last continue the discussion in peace.

「For that entertainment program, I want to start with a 『Popular Music Show』. Since there will be no one who will have bad feelings after hearing a beautiful singing voice. These girls are the handpicked candidate songstresses that will perform in that program. From after the day they were scouted all the way until recently, they have been receiving lessons in both singing and dancing at the 『Café Lorelei』 where Juna-san worked.」(Souma)

Well, the program's schedule had probably ended up being switched out of order. Originally I wanted to start with a 『Singing Contest』 to accustom the

Citizens for the thing called 『Popular Music Show』. Then, when they had become accustomed to the concept, then these girls would begin their debut as “Idol”s. However, if I broadcasted under the “current situation” then I need to step up to the next level and aim for the first impact. That’s what my idea introduced.

By the way, what I mean by “Idol” was the Showa-like[10] concept of 『Beautiful Woman with Skillful Singing』.[11] Since they didn’t currently have any concept of an “Idol”, they wouldn’t comprehend it if I suddenly made an idol group that deal with many things.[12] If it was the single singer format, then the populace could recognize it since there were already similar concepts such as a street minstrel, music café or songstress bar.

「I see, then that is 『Project Lorelei』?..... But, then that means you will do it right now?」(Liscia)

I understood Liscia’s doubt. She might not understand exactly why I wanted to start an entertainment program when we have just currently seized Amidonia’s capital city..... However,

「It is because right now is the right time. Well then, Juna-san, start the introductions.」(Souma)

「As you wish, Your Majesty.」(Juna)

Leaving the confused Liscia aside for now, Juna-san bowed and began to introduce the girls. First was the rightmost brown-haired elf-eared woman. Although I imagined elves to have blonde hair, which reminded me, I had also seen elves in foreign movies that had the same brown colored hair. She was fair-skinned and had saffron-colored irises. Her age based off of her appearance might be in the mid-twenties. Her manner was also dignified and gave off an impression similar to a career woman.



「She is Chris Tachyon-san[13]. Just like her appearance, she is a half-elf.」(Juna)

「Greetings, Your Majesty. I am Chris Tachyon.」(Chris)

Chris gave her greetings while putting her hand in front of the stomach and doing a 45 degree bow. Such an adult-like gesture reminded me of a flight attendant. Juna-san then began to explain Chris' talent.

「She is a former minstrel with a beautiful singing voice, but she is also fantastic in poetic recitation. Her voice is pleasant on the ears and she can recite the lines skillfully. The poetry narrated by her has a completely vivid feel to it as though it were cut out from the scenery itself. I think that while she can debut as a songstress, she is more suited for the task of a reporting news program, but might this be permitted?」(Juna)

「I see. So appointing her not as a songstress, but as a news announcer instead.」(Souma)

Certainly she had a pleasant voice for the ears and she also pronounced her words well. Since a female announcer also had an "Idol"-like facet, then wouldn't this be an unexpectedly wonderful idea? I asked for paper and pen from Hakuya and wrote a sentence on the paper before handing it over to Chris-san.

「Can you try to read the sentence written there for a moment?」(Souma)

「This? Umm..... 『This program is a work of fiction, any resemblance to actual people, organizations, locales or events, is entirely coincidental.』」(Chris)

「Hm. What a wonderful voice. She seems to be able to read the manuscript too, just like what Juna-san had suggested. You will be appointed to the news program.」(Souma)

「Thank you very much.」(Chris)

Chris-san bowed again with a smile. Liscia, who was beside me, asked with a low voice, 「What is the meaning of the sentence that she read just now?」, so I answered, also with a low voice, 「It is something that is handed down in my world. You will be safe as long as you say these magic words.」[14] While we were talking about this, Juna-san introduced the next person. This time, it was a girl with a cute appearance and had a similar age to Tomoe-chan. Her frilly lolita-style garments suited her well.

「Her name is Pamyu Carol-san[15] of the Youngling Race[16]」(Juna)

「I am Pamyu desu. Greetings desu.」[17] (Pamyu)

Pamiyu made a slight bow. Such a gesture was really cute, but.....

「Youngling Race? Like a Dwarf?」(Souma)

「No, not “Dwarf” but “Youngling”. Just like Elves, there are many races that stop aging physically at a certain point, but it is especially obvious in the Youngling Race, since when they become an adult, their appearance doesn’t differ from that of a 12 year old child. Even though Pamyu-san has this appearance, she is much older than me.」(Juna)

「Really!? So this world has such a race like this?」(Souma)

Isn’t this the ultimate “shota” and “lolita” race? What should I say, but this race made me very worried. Maybe I should make a sanctuary somewhere and place a signboard that says 『Yes, Lolishota. No, Touch』 where they will be protected by various “gentlemen”. Also, although I had ignored it until now, but this world also has dwarves. I hope that they don’t have any strange rings, though.....[18] While I was thinking about this, I sent a side glance towards Juna-san and she continued her explanation.

「She is someone who possesses a beautiful bell-like singing voice. She is especially proficient at singing a cute song in a cute way..... Since I have long passed such an age, I am not suited anymore to that kind of song, so I'm a bit envious of her talent.」(Juna)

「No way, I envy Juna-san more desu. Today, I planned to wear a strapless dress to meet with His Majesty, but since it couldn't hold on in certain places, it was considered to be impossible desu.」[19](Pamyu)

Juna-san and also Pamyu-san had a thousand-yard stare in their eyes. I could understand if it was Pamiyu, but it seemed that Juna-san was also worried about her mature appearance. From the viewpoint of an ordinary person, they should be satisfied if they had some points where they excelled more than another person, but this might be what they call "the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence." Which reminds me, in the film that I once saw, there was this line, 「The older woman wants to be treated as if they are younger, the younger woman wants to be treated as if they are older.」 Since Juna-san is just a bit older than me, I don't only want to be spoiled like a child by her kindness, but also to have the capability that she could rely upon once in awhile.

「The next person is Nanna Kamidzuki-san[20]. Just like her appearance, she is from Beastkin Race.」(Juna)

「He~llo~♪ It's Nanna daze~♪」(Nanna)

The cat-eared girl said so with a wide grin. She was maybe about 15-16 years old? She didn't dress up like the other two, and wore a tube-like dress and there were a football[21] supporter like paint lines on her face. Her appearance gave off an impression that could be said as a girl from a fishermen background. Glaive wanted to rebuke her for her frank behavior towards Royalty, but I raised my hand to stop him. I sensed a peculiar accent in her words (since The Hero Power granted automatic translation in my ears, I wouldn't notice this if this was

just a change of intonation).

「Perhaps, she is just not that familiar with the Elfrieden Language.」(Souma)

「That is correct, Your Majesty. She migrated from the Nine Headed Dragons Archipelago five years ago and lived amongst the robust fishermen in a seaside village. So please, show leniency for her impolite behavior.」(Juna)

Juna-san immediately covered her with sound arguments. I see, so she was an emigrant from the Nine Headed Dragon Archipelago. Including Elfrieden, many nations in the Continent use something that can be considered an international language in addition to the local languages. However, there were also many isolated nations such as the Nine Headed Dragon Archipelago that only used their native language.

「So, can she sing like that?」(Souma)

「There is no problem in that matter. When she is singing sailor's shanties when fishing, her voice is vigorous, combining both that of a girl and a boy's voice, and is more superior than I am singing tunes that sound cool. I believe she has a good affinity to the "anisong" that Your Majesty had taught me.」(Juna)

「Really?! Can she sing something?」(Souma)

「Yes, Your Majesty. I have taught her a tune as a test. Nanna-san, may I ask for you to perform?」(Juna)

「Ou♪! Leave it to Nanna」(Nanna)

When Juna-san asked her, Nanna began to gleefully sing. What she sang was Yamamoto Masayuki-san's 『Ah! Reversal King!』[22]. Ummm. Juna-san, why did you choose this song? Certainly this is an anisong, sounds cool, and really suits Nanna's singing voice. But you know, this is... I then asked Liscia with a whisper.

「By the way, do you and the others understand the meaning of the lyrics?」  
[23](Souma)

「I don't. It's like hearing a song of an unknown language. But I understand that this is a cool song.」(Liscia)

「Well, if you can understand that, then it will be good..... Perhaps.」(Souma)

After this, maybe I need to ask someone to write lyrics in the Elfrieden Language. When she had finished singing, Nanna turned towards me with a wide grin.

「King♪! How is it~?」(Nanna)

「.....Ah, it's amazing.」(Souma)

「Then, this is good ze~♪」(Nanna)

After saying this, Nanna said 「My turn has ended, right?」 and got back into place with a brisk pace..... What a truly unique girl. Her bashfulness, her novelty, and her movements on the large screen would be shining. Perhaps, she is going to be the number one idol amongst these girls. Now then, since everyone had finished with their introductions, I stood out and began to speak to Juna-san.

「You have gathered such splendidly talented people. You have my gratitude.」  
(Souma)

「Such words are unworthy for me.」(Juna)

Juna-san elegantly bowed. Alright, with this, all the pieces have been present. With these three girls in addition to Juna-san, who is suited for mellow adult songs, we will make the Elfrieden Kingdom's first Popular Song Show.

Then, that will not only be broadcasted to the Elfrieden Kingdom, but also to the “Amidonia Dukedom”.

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[1] Quiz Derby is the Japanese version of a Celebrity Sweepstakes quiz show. 倍率ドン、更に倍 is the catchphrase when the final question’s odds are increased by two times. Honestly, I don’t know how to turn this pun/joke/reference into English. As I never watch any English game show before...

[2] Like this:



[3] Have you read the English Government’s Iraq Enquiry (Chilcot Inquiry) report? The lack of Post War Occupation Strategy is one of the criticized points. At any rate, a good commander always thinks about what to do in postwar times, at least that what I learned after playing EU4.

[4] Also known as Yandere Smile!

[5] I’m not translating this... The people who watch anime would understand why. If a girl began go, “nee-nee XXX-san.” to a boy, you know it won’t end well.

[6] I imagine she is pouting.

[7] 王国一武闘会 (Oukokuichi Budoukai) is a parody of 天下一武道会 (Tenkaichi Budoikai) from Dragon Ball. Now to annoy my readers, here is the meaning:

Taken from <http://thedaofdragonball.com/blog/martial-arts/the-origin-of-the-tenkaichi-budokai/> (interesting site anyway)

Tenkaichi (天下一) is a combination of 3 Japanese Kanji based on the Chinese Hanzi.

Ten (天) means Heaven, and refers to the Upper Realm where the Buddhas, Daos and Gods live in the Chinese pantheon, and is the same Heaven that the characters refer to in Dragon Ball.

Ka (下) means Below, and is the character for One (一) with a line below it. The One character by itself refers to the unification of all things in Heaven, a period of time before the duality of Yin and Yang. Once the Earth was created there existed an “Above” and a “Below,” so anything Below (Heaven) is described with Ka, and simultaneously means “on the Earth.”

Ichi (一) means One and refers to a singular unification or simply the number one.

So Tenkaichi (天下一) really means “Number One Under Heaven.”

Budokai (武道会) is also a combination of 3 Japanese Kanji based on the Chinese Hanzi.

Bu (武) is the single character that epitomizes the Martial Arts, including martial ethics, techniques and history.

Do (道) is the Way, or Path. It’s a transliteration of the Chinese Dao (道). It implies a spiritual path or journey for practitioners, and when combined with Bu becomes Budo (武道), the Way of the Martial Artist.

Kai (会) means a gathering or conference under one roof. It’s a moment where people or things are brought together.

So Budokai (武道会) really means “Martial Arts Practitioners Gathering,” or “A Conference of Those Who Walk the Martial Path.”

Thus a more accurate translation of Tenkaichi Budokai (天下一武道会) is “The Number One Under Heaven Martial Arts Gathering.”

[8] Parody of “Kingdom Got Talent” I mean “America Got Talent”? (E/N: There’s also Britain’s Got Talent, the original show.)



[9] Parody of “Japan Bishoujo Grand Prix” Yes, Beauty Girl is actually Bishoujo. The winners are usually become big name in Japanese entertainment industry.

[10] Showa period (1926-1989) the reign of Emperor Hirohito

[11] Oh my, how should I explain this... The Japanese concept of an “Idol” is rather complex, just read Wikipedia article of Japanese Idol. Now, unlike modern Japanese Idol (Heisei Idol) that forwarded various “concept” (just look at AKB48). The old generation Idol, or Showa Idol only had simple concept of lovely girl with closely guarded/scripted personal life.

[12] Imagine AKB48 and their various subgroups

[13] クリス＝タキオン Kurisu Takion

[14] I better add similar disclaimer on my stories...

[15] パミーユ＝キャロル Pamiiyu Kyarolu. If you have better idea for how to romanize the name please tell me... T\_T (E/N: Isn't her name a reference to Kyary Pamyu Pamyu? Her full stage name is Caroline Charonplop Kyary Pamyu Pamyu.) Ah... Based on Google Image search Pamyu really a Kawaisha type Idol so it fits with the story. Pamyu then.

[16] 子人族 Kohitozoku a twist of 小人族 Kohitozoku for dwarf. This similarity lost in English translation. Since both sound the same, Souma is confused. But I can't translate it well.

[17] She adding desu in her sentence even when it's not needed so this might be a tic, or her cute way of talking?

[18] Dwarves in Nordic myth is associated with many rings.

[19] In other words... She lack chest.

[20] ナンナ＝カミヅキ Nanna Mikadzuki (in Japanese maybe her name is 南和 上月) A reader point out that she might a referene to Nana Mizuki, the seiyuu-singer (she is Hinata's Seiyuu)

[21] Association Football or Soccer. Not American Football or Rugby

[22] 嗚呼！逆転王 (Aa! Gyakutenou!) The Opening Song for Gyakuten! Ippatsuman! or Reversal! One-Punch/Charge/Blast Man!

<http://www.nicovideo.jp/watch/nm7134587>

[\[23\]](#) The lyric is kinda..... See for yourself: htm Translation:  
<https://atashi.wordpress.com/2010/07/22/gyakuten-ippatsuman-opening-theme-gyakuten-ippatsuman-3c/>

## Chapter 01 – Project Lorelei B

Among the things that we acquired after Amidonia Dukedom’s Capital 『Van』 capitulated, the one who made me extremely delighted was the Royal Broadcast Orb. This was the only orb that the Amidonia Dukedom possessed and was able to broadcast images to every receiver set in this country. Although I was told that the Royal Broadcast Orb is a leftover artifact from an ancient civilization and still wasn’t able to be produced by current technology, the number of orbs discovered was so numerous that excluding the constituent small countries of the Eastern Nations Alliance and the sapient Dragons’ self-governing region Star Dragon Mountain Range, each nation (the number of the orbs per nation differed though) possessed one.

However, basically the broadcasts won’t be able to be received by other countries. Well, if it was possible, then the information meant for domestic use would be known by other countries, so of course, it could also be used to incite citizens like what I did in Crimson Dragon Castle Town. Since the receiver set and the broadcast orb’s wavelength need to be configured before being used, then perhaps it was like an AM-FM radio or something to do with a frequency.

That’s why when I obtained Amidonia’s sole Broadcast Orb, it could be said that I now have the broadcasting rights monopoly for all receiver sets inside the Amidonia Dukedom. Adding the Elfrieden Kingdom’s Broadcast Orb that I had brought, then Elfrieden’s first 『Entertainment Program』 could be simulcasted to two countries. Would this broadcast bring any changes to the Amidonia Dukedom? Or would it not change anything? I was really excited for it.



『Van』 didn’t have anything like the 『Plaza Fountain』 that was installed with receiver set to display Royal Broadcasts. Instead, the receiver set was installed at a plaza -- it was only in name as it was just an empty field – at one end side of Van. In the first place, the Royal Broadcast in this country itself was only used on

New Year's to broadcast the Duke saying 『Don't ever forget the grudge against Elfrieden. It is national policy to recover the lost territory』 and this country's national policy. Because the citizens must gather to watch this New Year's broadcast or they will be punished for *lese majeste*, even if the citizens were sick or bed-ridden old people, they would be fastened and carried on a stool as they must not miss watching the broadcast.

And today, that young king of Elfrieden who had made 『Van』 capitulate, would perform a Royal Broadcast. Since most of the citizens had received extensive indoctrination over many decades, they didn't have any good impressions about Elfrieden. However, currently there was a mass of citizens gathered at the field to watch the broadcast. Perhaps this was because of the habits created over many years that they must watch the broadcast or be punished. But the people who carried the ill were turned away by the soldiers who guarded the venue, 「Don't overdo it.」

As the sun completely sunk down in the twilight sky, half of the gathered 『Van』's citizens made confused expressions, while the other half were angry. Because the Nobles and the Knights had completely left Van, what was left in Van were just the common citizens who didn't have anywhere to go. Naturally they hadn't received any decent information. Here and there, whispering could be heard as the citizens discussed their future worriedly.

「Damn that Elfrieden King..... What does he intend to do by gathering everyone?」

「I took a peek at him when he entered the castle, he looks like an effeminate man.」

「Don't judge him by his looks. He is someone who had led His Majesty Gaius around by his nose.」

「He will use the Royal Broadcast, right? What does he intend to make us listen to?」

Do he want another harem member? Such is the question.

Because of the lack of information, the discussion continued in erratic directions.

「He can't be possibly... intending to conscript all the men as soldiers and send them to the front lines for conquering all of Amidonia after this..... right?」

「No way! I am the breadwinner of my family. If I am conscripted, then what will happen to them!?!」

「We are the people who are on the occupied side. It wouldn't be strange if they did that to us...」

「No, that might be better. What if they ordered us to hand over the women and children as slaves.....」

「Well, if that is the desire of the strong, they will do it using force rather than asking us. Perhaps they will tell us to hand over all the beautiful girls inside this town.」

「Really? Then I might have to hide my wife.」

「Who will want your wife after seeing her?」

「You're wron-.....! Hey, it seems to have started.」

When they were in the middle of various absurd conversations, the receiver set at the center of the field began to project an image. The people thought that the young king in a military uniform would appear, but contrary to their expectations, it was showing a brown-haired beautiful Elf woman sitting behind a table. The woman crossed both of her hands on the long table placed in front of her and for some reason she didn't sit facing the front, but was facing bit diagonally to the left. Of course, only the woman's head was turned towards the front.

Just like the ghost from the Ring.

The woman sat in a 『Mona Lisa's Smile』 pose, which made her beauty more

radiant and particularly grabbed the hearts of the Amidonian men. The men felt that it was as if they were sitting at a counter in a bar and having a conversation with the woman was sitting beside them. Then, that woman began to speak.

『Good evening everyone. This is Chris Tachyon.』



「This program is 『NEWS Elfrieden』 a program that provides information to the citizens about the news from Elfrieden Kingdom and the neighboring countries. The first news is.....」

In a government affairs room at Van's Castle, that had been hurriedly transformed into a simple news studio (although we only placed a long table and a chair, since there were already furnishings leftover in the room), Chris-san began to read the news manuscript. Aisha and I were observing her from the corner of the room that didn't get projected by the orb. After watching her for awhile, Aisha pulled my sleeve.

「What is it?」(Souma)

「Umm... Why do we project her diagonally from the front?」(Aisha)

「Well..... Beauty style?」(Souma)

Aisha asked me with a small voice, but I can only answer her with such an answer. The reason was because I remembered how the female news announcer in Japan with the 「Ometenashi」 speech[\[1\]](#) sat in this position and I was just mimicking her. But when we held the rehearsal before, Chris-san begged in tears that 「Ugh, my neck is cramped」, so this diagonal way of projection might be the first and the last.

The content of the news was how about the details of the events in this war.

She explained in a simple way about how in order to subjugate Gaius VIII and Julius who incited disturbances in the Kingdom to invade our Kingdom's territory, how the Elfrieden King, Souma, performed a counter invasion against the Dukedom, defeated Gaius VIII, and made the capital 『Van』 capitulate. Aisha then tilted her head.

「Isn't it better for Your Majesty to directly make a speech about this information? Even though Your Majesty's fame might increase just like the time of the food gathering.」(Aisha)

「The situation is different from that time. This broadcast is also transmitted to the entire Amidonia Dukedom. No matter what the enemy country's King say, the Dukedom's citizens wouldn't want to hear it. But conveying the information through a third party like this will do the trick well.」(Souma)

Well, when we discussed the content of the news manuscript with Hakuya and the others, they gave out exaggerated ideas like 『Our Beloved Majesty the King for our welfare's sake.....』, but since it gave off a feeling “like a certain dictatorship somewhere”[\[2\]](#), I rejected it. Ah well, even if she said such lines, Chris-san will still smoothly read the news manuscript handwritten by Juna-san with a nice voice that was pleasant to the ears.

「.....so was the information we received. Though currently, the Kingdoms Army remains in Amidonia Dukedom's Capital 『Van』, for the time being, hostilities have ceased between both sides. Elfrieden's King, Souma Kazuya, has released the following statements regarding this. 『The current war is a war to subjugate Gaius and Julius who had invaded our Kingdom, we will not extend the war any further than this, it is not in our country's intend to harm the Dukedom's citizens. Regarding the citizens of Van, we will give assistance, so the citizens will be able to quickly return to their normal lives. Furthermore, since Van is annexed as an Elfrieden territory, we will promise that it will receive the same food aid available to the Kingdom's cities and will also undertake maintenance of any essential utilities.』 The one who is in charge of this task,



Minister of Agriculture and Forestry, Poncho Ishidzuka, will distribute food rations in Van tomorrow. We have been informed that the viewer is encourage to invite their family members and neighbors to go to the distribution.」



「What a joke!」

The new Amidonian Duke, Julius (it was just a self-given title, since just like Souma, he hasn't had his enthronement ceremony yet), who was watching the broadcast from a city nearby 『Van』, yelled and smashed the receiver unit with his sword, before immediately giving an order to his subordinates.

「Quickly send out messengers to each city to stop watching this joke of a broadcast!」

「『『Yes Your Highness.』』」

His subordinates quickly dispersed to send out messenger soldiers. Looking at them until they left, Julius glared towards 『Van』's direction.

「Telling us that he doesn't have any intend to harm the Dukedom's citizens after stealing our capital city, what impudent words to say! Foolish invaders, Van will surely be taken back!」

If Souma heard this, he might say 「You are the last person I want to hear that from」. While saying such words with indignation, Julius yelled in such an agitated manner. However, even if he said to inform each city, it wasn't like the order would be immediately delivered to those cities, moreover since he had been defeated in battle, Julius had lost his unifying force and didn't have any actual controlling power over every city. So, in reality the order was only executed in the city where Julius stayed in and the surroundings cities. In other words, nearly all of the cities in the Amidonia Dukedom continued to watch

Souma's broadcast.

After all, either this or watching crow flies.

The reaction of the Amidonia Dukedom's citizens after watching this broadcast was mostly split into two. First, Van's citizens were relieved since it didn't say that they were to be conscripted and sent to the frontlines or to 「hand over your properties, wives and daughters」. Just by being occupied, it was already quite a pressure. On the other hand, the people that lived in the cities and villages outside Van were interested not by 「Gaius VIII's death」 or 「Souma started this war with a just cause」, but instead by 「as an Elfieden territory, it will receive the same food aid available to the Kingdom's cities」.

Of course, the Amidonian people were in half-doubt over these words and mostly didn't believe it. After all, they were the words of the King of an enemy country. Everyone would just think that they were just words to win them over to his side..... However, it was the truth that Souma's words had deeply penetrated into the heart of the Amidonian people who had been plagued by a food shortage even worse than the Elfriedens. For the ones who were suffering from it, it had penetrated even deeper.



「.....for the present situation, regarding our country's medical treatment.....」

Ten minutes had passed since Chris' News Program started. The news that she presented right now were the final news items. After this News Program ends, finally the 『Popular Song Show』 will begin. Aisha, who stood beside me, was grabbing at my arm with a nervous expression. The hand grabbing me was trembled a bit.

「Wh-what should I do, Your Majesty. The trembling won't stop.」(Aisha)

「Calm down. This is the second time you appeared on a broadcast, right?」(Souma)

「But last time, I was just eating, so it was alright.....」(Aisha)

Yes. The current popular music show's presenter was me and the assistant, Aisha. I don't have any intention for her to do the hosting, but since the other people who could be pushed for the task, Poncho, was busy with preparations for food ration distribution, and Hakuya, who firmly denied it by saying he wasn't suitable for this. That's why I was stuck with Aisha who was clattering her teeth.

「Hah..... In the battlefield, you are very gallant, but in this field why are you so disappointing?」(Souma)

I scratched my head while feeling astonished, so Aisha just dropped her shoulders and moaned.

「Uuu... I have confidence that I won't be defeated by anyone in the battlefield. However, I don't have any confidence in the field of beauty. There a lot of people prettier than me, right? Like Princess-sama or Juna-dono, they are delicate fair-skinned beautiful short young ladies. I am dark-skinned and muscled.....」[\[3\]](#)  
(Aisha)

Even if she said she was muscled, she was not as muscular as a body builder. Or rather, she had a shapely figure to the extent that it was mysterious how she could swing a large sword without being bulging with muscles. Moreover, her height was like a model's and since it was always covered by armor, it was hard to see it, sbut she had a figure that was better than average. On the contrary, shouldn't it be Liscia who would be envying her instead?

「Hm. Aisha is already beautiful.」(Souma)

「I-Is that so!?」(Aisha)

Aisha blushed from being praised. However, she quickly calmed down.

「B-but, Your Majesty. As expected... as expected... the host should be Juna-san or Princess-sama.....」(Aisha)

「Juna-san will be singing, so she will be too busy to become a host, while for Liscia to be the assistant..... I think it would be better to give it up for awhile this time.」(Souma)

「? Did something happened?」(Aisha)

「Perhaps it's because I am somewhat anxious to be the host. To put it bluntly, rather than Aisha's ability as an assistant, I am expecting more from your ability as a bodyguard. If something happens, then Aisha would go to my side and protect me, right?」(Souma)

「That is certainly..... Eh!? Will there be something dangerous!?」(Aisha)

With a plop, I put my hand on the worried Aisha's forehead.

「Well, perhaps it will be alright. When that time arrives..... Please protect this sad excuse of a man.」(Souma)

「Your Majesty..... Yes! I will become Your Majesty's Shield! This body too will be *mumblemumble*\*」(Aisha)

I quickly put my hand over Aisha's mouth.

「Your voice is too loud. We are still on a live broadcast right now.」(Souma)

「*mumble*..... So-sorry.」(Aisha)

Hurm, as expected, she is a disappointing dark elf after all.

「.....or so was the information we received. This is 『NEWS Efrieden』 reporting..... The next program will be Elfrieden's first entertainment program broadcast. For the viewers who aren't in a hurry, please watch the next program.」

Ulps, Chris-san's program seems to be finished. Well, now is our part. The recording place for the Popular Song Show wouldn't be in this room, but would be carried out at an atrium hall that was used for banquet dance. There were already tables prepared where some of the soldiers were sitting just like in a『Cable Awards Ceremdeony』.[\[4\]](#) Since the presence or the absence of audience would influence the climax. Then, I held out my hand in front of Aisha.

「Now, let's go, Aisha.」(Souma)

「Okay, I will accompany you anywhere!」(Aisha)

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[\[1\]](#) Souma refers to Christel Takigawa, a news announcer who brings the “Omotenashi” Olympic speech as the Japanese Olympic Ambassador. And now we know where the name Chris Tachyon comes from. (Kurisuteru = Kurisu. Takigawa = Takion). Omotenashi means Hospitality.

[\[2\]](#) *coughcough*\* North something-something *coughcough*\* something-something Il *coughcough*\* (E/N: [www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLuKg-WhduhklQR2uqYCE\\_aSZgfJLsy4fx](http://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLuKg-WhduhklQR2uqYCE_aSZgfJLsy4fx)) Don't click if you are sensitive to crude parodies and jokes.

[\[3\]](#) No offense to people with dark skin. Please remember that most East Asian are relatively white/fair-skinned and white skin is considered as one of the desirable beauty traits for East Asian.

[\[4\]](#) Japan Cable Awards are just like Grammy Awards, gifted to the best song of the year.

# Chapter 01 – Project Lorelei C

A while after the news programme ended, the broadcast receiver placed on the plaza in a corner of Vannes was showing a pair of man and woman. The man was a young man wearing a black tuxedo while the woman was a young dark elf girl in a red dress. In contrast to the man who was standing magnificently, the woman was looking tense. Right then, one of the audience said, “oi, isn’t the man Elfrieden’s King?” and in response, those who had seen the Elfrieden Army enter Vannes said things like “that’s right! I saw him when he entered!”, or “that’s Elfrieden’s King Soma!” or “there’s no mistaking him!”.

Not knowing that he was being talked about like that, Soma put on a gentle expression and put a 20 cm long thing with a rounded end [1](#) to his mouth and said [Good evening].

[Songs accompany the world and the world accompanies Song. There are songs that are handed down through the ages]

[W, wait, what’s that line!? That’s not what we rehearsed, right!?!]

Looks like that line was ad-libbed and confused the young girl.

[I’m this show’s presenter Souma Kazuya]

[I, I’m Aisha Udgard!]

[Hang on, Aisha, don’t be so tense. Smile, smile]

[Y, Your Highness too, why are you speaking politely!?!]

[Well, I’m a presenter here. Can’t put on airs just because I’m the king, can I?]

[But you just went back to your normal tone while you said that!]

[Whoops, my bad]

Soma made a light joke and Aisha became the butt of it. An Elfriedenian would have looked at those two warmly with a smile, but the people of Amidonia had perplexed faces on. They have heard that Soma was the one who ingeniously trifled with the brave Gaius VIII and valiantly killed him [2](#). They could not associate that courageous and wise King with the young man who was teasing the dark elf they were seeing on the broadcast.

“His highness the Prince lost to *this*?”

“I know, he must be trying to get us to let our guard down!”

“But why? Vannes already surrendered, didn’t we?”

“Well, that’s ... hm, I wonder why?”

Away from the bewildered residents of Vannes, Soma continued his presenting.

[Now then, this broadcast is Elfrieden’s first ever Music Programme. We have gathered ladies with all different kinds of singing voices of for this broadcast. These three are all wonderful talents, exactly what I’d call Lorelei]

This was the moment when the term that was this world’s equivalent of *idol*, the [Lorelei] was conceived.

[This programme was brought to relieve all you who are tired after a day’s work. Please have a listen to the Lorelei’s songs to the end and ‘relax’]

[Why is the last word in monotone!?!]

[Don’t mind it. Anyway, it’s your line next, Aisha]

Prompted by Soma, Aisha flusteredly continued.

[Ummm ... We have three singers today but Elfrieden is currently recruiting those of you who are proud of your singing voices. M, myananyawyomya <sup>3</sup> ...]

[Aisha, enunciation]

[Q, quiet down please. Umm ... men and women of all ages, self-recommended or otherwise are allowed]

[Well, we certainly do want some male singers. Hum, but you can’t really call men Lorelei, can you. What should we call them then? Merman?]

[That’s a monster’s name already. It doesn’t need to be related to the sea, right?]

Ah, um ... anyone who’s proud of their singing voice and anyone who loves to sing can apply for an audition at a “Lorelei” branch store in a city near you]

[Lorelei has branch stores!?!]

[Why are you surprised Your Highness!?!]

[Well, I’ve been leaving everything related to the auditions to Juna ...]

[By the way, the main store is the one in Lagoon city]

[The one in Parnam is a branch store!?!]

Someone in the audience in Vannes giggled as Soma did his retort. That person hurriedly covered his mouth. He thought he might get beaten up by the others if



they saw him laugh seeing a broadcast. That was why the plaza in Vannes had been wrapped in a tense air for a while. Not knowing the tension in Vannes' plaza, Soma continued.

[Now then, let's call them in. The first Lorelei is a legal loli hobbit with the looks of a young girl but the heart of an adult, miss Pamille Carroll!]

[Miss Pamille's favorite thing is taking a nap at lunchtime, but lately she's been feeling really good and slept until morning, and then sleep in late. ... um, Your Highness? Is this information really necessary?]

[Now then, let's hear it for Pamille Carroll with "Koi no Dig Dug" [4](#) !]

As Soma said that, a somewhat carefree tune played. At the same time, the broadcast projected the image of a balcony in a wide hall. There stood a lovely young girl who looked about twelve years of age clad in a dress with lots of frills attached. This must be the Pamille Carroll he was talking about. Pamille brought both her hands over her chest and began singing in a bell-like voice that matches her appearance.

A lovely young girl singing in a lovely voice. Seeing the spectacle, the people of Amidonia thought, *cute*, but they didn't question whether the song was good or bad, they were just perplexed. The Royal Broadcast was showing a young girl singing. Was the scene happening before their eyes real or not?

"What's with that girl. She's really cute"

"Yeah, well, she's cute ... but is it okay to use the Royal Broadcast like this?"

"Don't ask me. Like I'd know that"

"Lord Gaius would never have used it for anything frivolous"

"Is this kind of thing normal in Elfrieden?"

Conversations of such nature were exchanged all over the place. *Is this the difference in culture between Elfrieden and Amidonia? Was the King of Elfrieden the one who produced this broadcast?* The people in the city of Vannes occupied by Elfrieden received a particularly big shock.

"I see ... we're in Elfrieden now"

Someone from the audience muttered that. That nonchalant remark spread among the audience like water soaking into parched soil.

“Vannes is now Elfrieden Kingdom territory, is it?”

“Well, that’s what occupation means, I guess”

“Which means we’re no longer in Amidonia anymore?”

“Huh, so there’s no problem with showing this kind of broadcast anymore?”

Meanwhile, in a different place from the confused people of Vannes, the broadcast continued. Pamille sang her song to the end while scattering her charm, then Soma and Aisha came back on stage.

[And that was miss Pamille Carroll with *Koi no Dig Dug*. I must say ~ music is really nice, isn’t it]

[I wonder why. I was thinking “That’s music, isn’t it” despite myself]

[Now then, continuing on to the next song, let’s have the next talent sing us a song full of spirit. Her best part is her volume forged singing sailor’s songs in men-infested fishing grounds. A simple cat-eared girl born in the Nine Headed Dragon Archipelago. Nanna Kamidzuki]

[Miss Nanna’s dream is to be able to eat her favorite fish Tuna whole, but she could never do it out at sea where they were on the lookout against food snitchers ... um, is this really, actually necessary?]

[Now let’s give it for Nanna Kamidzuki with “Love Song Sagashite” [5](#)]

[Ah, so you’re completely letting it pass ...]

The next singer to appear was the lively cat-eared young girl Nanna Kamidzuki in a light punk costume. Her healthy limbs liberally exposed by her sleeveless top and short pants and her peeking navel drew out her charm that was lovely despite its androgyny. As Nanna began to sing she jumped down from the balcony.

“Wha!?”

“H, hey ...”

That scene made the audience hold their breaths, it was probably something not rehearsed. They noticed the fixed orb hurriedly being moved. Her singing voice continued so there was no problem but for a while Nanna wasn’t showing on the broadcast. When she finally returned, Nanna looked to be enjoying herself dancing on the stairs underneath. As the audience sighed in relief, they were drawn into her song and dance.

“Good on you missy! More!”

“The song’s good too, huh. It feels lively and bright”

Having gotten used to it by the second performance, those voices came out from among the packed audience at Vannes. A young girl was enjoying herself singing and dancing. Every man who saw it would enjoy himself too.

Unexpectedly, however, the women of Amidonia were more shocked than the men. Their attentions were focused on Nanna’s fashion show.

“Isn’t she cold wearing that?”

“It’s fine since she’s indoors, right?”

“But looking like that ... isn’t she afraid she’d be yelled at for leading men astray?”

The Principality of Amidonia was first and foremost a military focused country. The men are expected to be strong more than anything, and the women modest and supportive of them. For that reason, besides in formal occasions, women weren’t allowed to dress up. The reason was that by dressing up, they would entice men and become a source of weakness, which was troubling. To say nothing about wearing those clothes that expose lots of skin [6](#) and standing in public view, that might have had gotten her arrested for upsetting the public morals.

“I suppose she wouldn’t get arrested in Elfrieden”

“It’s another country after all. The King looks like a nice person, too”

“... how nice”

But women who wanted to be beautiful, women who wanted to dress up exist across national borders and ethnic boundaries. They wanted something like Pamille’s frilly dress earlier and Nanna’s open costume now. If they could, they also wanted to try wearing that and dancing. Their clothing lit a spark of fire in the hearts of the Amidonian women. Especially those who lived in Vannes.

“We’re not in Amidonia anymore, right?”

“So that means we can dress up too?”

“We could, couldn’t we? The angry soldiers all left the city anyways”

It ended up becoming that conversation. By the time Nanna’s lively song ended, applause erupted from the audience. Nobody worried about whether

Soma was trying to win them over any longer. That was how much they enjoyed the show. When Nanna's song ended, the broadcast temporarily cut off. They were probably putting the orb back in its place. After a while the broadcast came back on and showed the wryly smiling Soma and Aisha.

[... we underestimated Nanna's liveliness]

[... you can say that again]

[I never thought that in an age where doing manzai with a mic was commonplace there would be someone who would introduce a 55-skits-legend-like overaction where you jump out of the frame of a fixed camera ... My, Nanna Kamidzuki, such a frightening child]

[What are you talking about? And why did you say it in feminine speech?]

[Now let us return to the show. And for the moment you've all been waiting for. It's now finally time for our country's prided Prima Lorelei to make her appearance]

[Miss Juna, she's been popular since her first broadcast hasn't she]

Thinking back to it, Juna Doma had completely become Elfrieden's top songstress ever since the second Royal Broadcast. She was unveiled at the time of the Personnel Gathering Awards Ceremony to buy time to listen to Tomoe, and she became the charming host during the foodstuff gathering too, so her fame and popularity was going through the roof. Juna faced the popularity with a wry smile saying "I'm also a commissioned officer in the navy too, though".

[... the National Assembly sent me a petition letter saying "please broadcast Juna's singing voice more", which of course weirded me out]

[Uwaa ... umm, miss Juna was looking for herb tea for stiff shoulders lately ... those who have them big have it hard]

[... Well then let's hear it for Juna Doma with "Lights ~ Haruka naru Tabidachi [7](#)"]

[What was that pause just now?]

The screen showed Soma looking the other way while Aisha was glaring at him and faded out, in their place appeared the blue haired beauty Juna Doma. She was wearing a piece of fabric wrapped around her upper body while her lower body was clad in a pair of puffy white pants that tightened around her ankles. There was a thin silken veil covering her face, making her look like a dancer straight out of the world of "1001 nights". Her beauty captivated the men and

women of the audience, and when her voice finally came out, Elfriedenians and Amidonians alike swallowed their breaths.

The audience now knew what Soma meant when he said “Prima Lorelei”. Juna’s voice was not like Pamille’s voice that carried a unique character. However, her intonation that was overflowing with expressive power was seared in their memories deeper than Pamille’s did. Also, while the volume of her voice was far from Nanna’s volume that was forged in the fishing grounds, but her graceful intonations permeated deeper into their hearts. The audience were convinced, Juna Doma was without peer in history, the number one Lorelei of this age.

The Amidonian members of the audience were completely mesmerized by the three songstresses. *So the Royal Broadcast could be this much fun*, they thought. At this point, nobody cared whether this was a means by Soma to win them over any longer. It was an overused expression, but music is the act of enjoying sounds [8](#). That was why nobody noticed Soma’s intent.

There was only one exception.



“That king. He plays dirty ...”

In a plaza in the fortress town [Nerva] at the southwestern edge of Amidonia, one person who was blending in with the audience watching the broadcast muttered. That person was hiding themselves by wearing a hooded cloak and their expression was unreadable. What was clear was that the person was a slight bit smaller compared to the other members of the audience and that they were female judging from the tone of their voice. There was another person next to the hooded woman, who was dressed in the same way as her but had a larger build (though they were just at the average height of an adult male). They asked her.

“Playing dirty, is it?”

“Aye, dirty. He suddenly gies the people what Faither took awa’ from them. Julius cannae hope tae get his rights back now [9](#)”

*Well, tha’ might be guid for the folk tho*, the hooded girl shrugged her

shoulders. The hooded man standing next to her looked at her confused.

“Um, Princess. What did His Highness Gaius take away?”

“Whut else? O course it’s [freedom], Colbert-*han*”

The hooded little girl was Gaius VIII’s daughter Roroa Amidonia and the hooded man was the former Finance Minister Colbert who hid himself together with Roroa. Roroa pointed at the broadcast and said

“Ye dinnae think tha’ Amidonia will ever be usin’ the Royal Broadcast like that, dressin’ the bonnie lasses up an lettin’ the lads go ooh an aah over them d’ye? Faither dinna like tae spread tha’ kinda weakness around ye see. But that King wants showin’ the folk tha’ Elfrieden allows tha’ sort o thing”

“In other words, *he showed them freedom*”

Colbert answered, to which Roroa clapped her hands, *aye, exactly*.

“Och aye. Thas why he plays dirty. Freedom is ‘free’. Soma willna’ hurt any gieing them that, but they’ll fight back if we take that awa’ from them. D’ye think that right awful brother will gie them [freedom] after borrowin’ the Empire’s power tae get Vannes back? ... Aye right! He willna’ fash over the folk rebellin’, thar’s sure goin’ tae be chaos”

“Huh!? Did Soma even go so far as to even take the loss of Vannes into consideration!?”

“Thas how is lookin’ in ma eyes”

“.....”

Colbert widened his eyes. This little girl in front of him, who if you took away her cloak would look just like a cute little tanuki, was able to accurately guess the aim of Soma who led Gaius VIII by the nose. If the Lord of Amidonia weren’t Gaius or Julius but Roroa, would the future of Amidonia have been different? There’s no mistaking it, is there. That realization vexed Colbert. However, the person herself, Roroa, wasn’t even thinking like that at all.

“Well he’s not an enemy Faither can win against. That’s cause Faither dinna ken anythin’ outwith the battlefield . Sheesh ... no matter how many times A told him tha’ if we dinnae stimulate consumption an revitalize the economy we’ll stay in depression, but he never listens”

Hearing Roroa anguishedly talk, Colbert flusteredly said.

“Um, Princess ... about your Father ...”

“Ach, dinna fash yerself. A’m not all tha’ fasht anyway”

The other day Amidonia had just been crushed by Elfrieden in battle and word reached Roroa that her father Gaius VIII had been killed by Elfrieden’s King Soma Kazuya. But in contrast to the worried Colbert, Roroa only waved her hands.

“A wonder why, tho, whan A heard Faither died A dinna feel sad at all. So ev’n in the end A cannae get along wi’ Faither and Julius, eh ...”

“Princess .....

“If pushed tae say I’d say it wis more shockin’ tha’ A wisna’ shocked. Afore grudging Soma for killin’ Faither A’m rather more curious abou’ him. The way he restored tha’ old-fashioned country an the way he used the Royal Broadcast ... A wonder whut sort o world he was aifter livin’ in. A wanna go and meet wi’ him. ... Colbert-*han*, am A cauld-hearted?”

A pair of uneasy eyes peeked out from under the hood. Those teary eyes looked just like an abandoned puppy. Seeing Roroa like that, Colbert shook his head, *no!*

“Princess is not like Gaius, you truly were thinking for this country! That’s why you feel closer to Soma who also thinks for the people rather than Gaius or Julius who puts policy and ideology first! That is the sign that you’re the true Princess of this country!”

Colbert rattled on and on, and Roroa who *should’ve* had a look like an abandoned puppy, said:

“Really? Guid than”

Then she giggled.

(W, wait, was that crocodile tears!?)

Of course, even the gentle Colbert was angered, but he held himself back. That’s because both ways are possible with Roroa. This girl is capable of both acting like she was sad or acting like she wasn’t sad even though she really was. Only Roroa herself knew what was inside her heart. Colbert had known her long enough to understand that, being one of the few people who shared his economic sense. Which is why Colbert refrained from saying anything.



Looking at Colbert, Roroa smiled. She took his arm and began to walk.

“Come now, we hafta hurry as well. Soma is movin’ a lot faster than A thought”

“O, okay!”

As she walked, Roroa turned her head back. She saw Soma’s face in the projection and smiled.

*(A’m not lettin’ ye do a quickie <sup>10</sup> on this country an run away whan you please. A’m goin’ tae git ye tae take proper responsibility. Git ready, Soma♪)*

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1. It’s supposed to be a mic but since the Royal Broadcast Orb picked up all sound it was just decoration <sup>11</sup> ↵
2. He only pierced through a gap in Gaius’ defense in the middle of a fight but these details weren’t made widely known ↵
3. TN: She’s trying to say *rounyakunannyo* (men and women old and young) ↵
4. TN: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xYL9qr52D6s&#160;>↵
5. TN: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kZ2t-DXVv\\_w&#160;](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kZ2t-DXVv_w&#160;)↵
6. Just showing their hands and feet were considered too much exposure. ↵
7. TN: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MHwzve31kNg&#160;>↵
8. TN: the word for music (音楽) is composed of the words for sound (音) and enjoyment (楽) ↵
9. TN: I hope I’m not overdoing Roroa’s accent [Here](#)’s the last part without the accent if you find it too hard to read... ↵
10. TN: *yarinige*: fuck-and-chuck *wham-bam-thank-you-maam* sleep with someone then disappear ↵

## Chapter 01 – Project Lorelei D

After Juna finished her singing, it was Pamille's turn again. Since we still didn't have enough songstresses, we decided to have each one sing twice for this broadcast. I chose the moment Pamille's turn ended and Nanna began her second turn to drag Aisha somewhere people couldn't see and the broadcast couldn't pick up.

"W, what's wrong Your Highness. We're still on air though?"  
"I told you I'm uneasy about something this broadcast, right? I'm talking about what comes after Nanna"

I tried to say as calm as possible to the bewildered Aisha.

"When the next stage begins, I'll be counting on you as my guard"  
"Wha!? No way, is Juna plammmpmmmpphhhhh"

I used my hand to cover Aisha's mouth that was about to yell out loud in the middle of a broadcast. Once she's properly calmed down I shook my head"

"Not Juna. After Nanna and before Juna's second performance, there's a singer coming in between"

"Mmmmpuh ... I, I haven't heard of this!"

"I told you, it's a sudden thing. It was decided suddenly right before the broadcast. If I told you before it happened you'd have all your attention there and flub your lines"

"Grrrr ... I can't really deny that"

Aisha seems to be aware of it herself. She mumbled. I plopped my hand on her head.

"Well if the worst happens I'll be counting on you. Since you're a presenter you can't carry your greatsword, but should I get you some small weapons?"

"No, in that case I'll fight barehanded ... wait is she really that dangerous!?"

"Well ... if it goes like I thought then it won't be a problem. This is just a precaution after all"

"Precaution, is it ... understood. I'll protect Your Highness with my life"

Aisha thumped her chest with a thud. She looks really reliable in times like this. Now then, will a demon or a snake come out ...



When Nanna's second turn ended, there was a relaxed atmosphere around the audience in Amidonia. They were genuinely enjoying this musical performance. Judging from the sequence it would be Juna Doma's turn next so they were wild with anticipation to listen to her voice again.

Then the next moment that atmosphere was instantly blown away. There was a woman displayed on the broadcast. She was about forty to fifty years old. She was nearly two meters tall, and was obviously muscular even through her military clothes. She had a stern face and swept-back hair so one could rarely recognize her as a woman at first glance. In fact, only the Amidonians realized that she was a woman, the Elfriedenians tilted their heads in confusion, "Why is there suddenly an old man there?"

Next to her, Soma and Aisha appeared. Soma was wearing a presenter-like wide smile but Aisha had a guarded look on her face, watching the woman. Soma then said:

[Now then, we have a guest performance today. Margarita Wanda [1](#) from the Principality of Amidonia. While the defense army was leaving Vannes, she stayed behind in order to make sure the civilians were unharmed as promised"]

The citizens of Vannes nodded. *That's just like Wanda*, they thought. Even in the Principality of Amidonia where a woman could not so easily become prominent, she was a heroic woman who rose to the rank of lieutenant general with her bravery and leadership. The citizens feared her valor and stern looks but she was a trustworthy person with good character. However, that was exactly why it was strange. Why was that Wanda standing on the stage together with Soma.

[Wanda is here as a prisoner of war, but because of the reasons for her capture, she was confined to house arrest. When she heard about our broadcast today, she bid herself, "I want to sing as well"]

[.....]

Soma said cheerfully but Margarita was quiet. Noticing the stark difference in

temperature between the two, the citizens of Vannes felt chills up their spines.

“Hey ... what’s going to happen?”

“No way, is Wanda trying to use this chance to kill Soma”

“No, well, Wanda wouldn’t do something underhanded like that ...”

“But look at the Dark Elf’s face. She’s obviously on guard”

“Soma looks tense as well, even though he’s smiling”

Even though it happened in the royal castle a distance away, the audience in Vannes were able to notice the restless air. In that kind of atmosphere, Soma continued presenting with a smile.

[Now let’s hear it for Margarita Wanda with ... “Beyond Gordoa Valley”]

When the audience heard that name, the air around the audience froze. “Beyond Gordoa Valley” was the national anthem of the Principality of Amidonia. She was going to sing it in Vannes that was under occupation, and she was going to sing in front of the occupying king, Soma. The Amidonians instantly noticed the meaning in that. Margarita was even resolved to die. As Soma and Aisha left the stage, solemn music began playing. Then finally, Margarita began singing.

♪[Beyond Gordoa Valley] (Amidonian National Anthem)

Spreading beyond the mountains  
Of Ursula where the sun was born  
Is the land of our forefathers  
The land whither we will once return

March the war-horses  
Over the mountain of corpses of your brethren  
March ye brave warriors  
And be one with the soil beyond Gordoa

Her husky voice wove into a powerful song, giving the Principality citizens goosebumps along their backs. Margarita’s song forced the citizens of the Principality to realize anew that they were Amidonians. Even the citizens of Vannes. It was like a wave of cold air to the budding flower of Elfriedenian [Freedom] Soma was putting on show, making the bud close back.



(What an intense song ...)

I was listening to Margarita's song at the side of the stage. When the song began the soldiers around the venue stirred, but because they were ordered to "stay in their seats no matter what happened and listen to the songs," nobody made an uproar. It wasn't hard to say why everyone stirred. After all, she was singing to "attack the Kingdom of Elfrieden". The land "beyond Ursula where the sun was born" referred to the former Amidonian territory (and current Elfriedenian territory) east of the Ursula mountains.

She was saying to march horses and soldiers there. Which means the anthem urged for the crossing of Gordoa valley and into Elfrieden. ... how should I put this, *do you even have to go that far*, or something. The tenacity of a military nation that even its citizens is impressive. While I was thinking that, Aisha asked me in a hushed voice.

*("Your Highness. Is this alright? Her singing this kind of song")*

*("... Well, this is well within my expectations")*

I answered in a quiet voice with my arms folded.

*("An officer of the enemy nation suddenly said she wanted to take part in a music show. The reasons would probably be to [use the broadcasts to incite patriotism among the viewers], or to [take the chance to get close to me and strike]. I took the liberty of examining her character beforehand, and I predicted her to be a frank person, but in the latter case I would be counting on you, Aisha")*

*("You knew!? Then shouldn't you not let her sing ...?")*

*("Because I knew, I could prepare countermeasures")*

While we were having that conversation, Margarita's song ended. As the song ended, Margarita sat down hard on the spot. We then walked up to her.

"This is to show the backbone of an Amidonian. Now go ahead and take my head"

She said so and straightened her back. ... I knew it, she did this with resolve to die. She had probably even considered that she would be killed on the spot. In

truth, if I finished Margarita off here the broadcast would've come to nothing. Which was why I said 'with a smile'.

"Why? You have a good singing voice"

Hearing the unexpected answer, Margarita widened her eyes. ... apologies to your resolve, but I'm not going to fall for that.

"You have a good voice, sounds well suited for R&B. I'd really like you to do a cover of [Ano Kane o Narashita Anata] or [Snake Eater] in Japanese"

Hearing me say that so lightly Margarita glared at me.

"... I sang the Amidonian Anthem you know. If you let this reckless act pass you'll undermine Elfrieden's authority you know?"

"Don't call it a reckless act when you're the one who did it, and then so what? There's no law in Elfrieden that says you can't sing another country's national anthem. We're not in Amidonia anymore"

I looked away from Margarita and turned towards the Royal Broadcast orb.

"What is a good country. The answer doesn't come that easy. But at least, I think a country where you can freely sing songs is a good country. Fun songs, sad songs, songs of love, songs of the country, songs of other countries, war songs, anti-war songs. A country where you can sing any song is a good country, that's what I think"

I then stretched the palm of my hand to the orb and said.

"What do *you* think, ladies and gentlemen of the audience?"



There was a tower in the west of Vannes. The inside of the grotesque moss-covered spire was turned into a prison, where high ranking criminals (nobles, knights, or above) were imprisoned. But even if it's a prison for high-ranked prisoners, it was far from a suite room, and only had a plain jail room inside. During Amidonian rule, political prisoners were kept here. Those who subvert the state or those who 'were going to' go against the will of the nation.

'Were going to' did not necessarily have anything to do with actually having 'done' it. This kind of crime were usually used to take down one's political

opponents. It had torture dungeons for obtaining confessions underground, there were a lot of cases where nobles charged with crime were made to confess down there and were sent along with their entire families to the executioners. When one approaches this tower at night, one would hear the moans of the prisoners who were tortured during the day, and thus the tower came to be called the [Tower of Moans].

In one of the jails in the Tower of Moans, Liscia and Carla were sitting opposite each other, separated by iron bars. Carla, as a hostage from the Air Force, was currently being locked up in this prison. Liscia brought a small Royal Broadcast receiver in and was watching together with Carla. It was a normal music show up until halfway but with the sudden appearance of the Amidonian general, the two finally noticed Soma's aim.

"He even included the Amidonian general trying to fan up patriotism in his plans"

"He's showing the Amidonians that he's big enough to accept Amidonian patriotism"

"So Soma's telling the Amidonians that they can sing anything they like in our country. No, not just songs. Music, literature, painting, sculpture ... he's saying they're free to express themselves in any kind of art"

"Self-expression, huh ... that's the one thing Amidonia hates the most"

For the military nation that Amidonia was, it was easier to deal with the citizens if they were all the same. That way they could just announce their plan to knock Elfrieden down and gain support. If they diversity in things like ideas, there were going to be people coming out saying "isn't it better to make peace with Elfrieden and coexist in trade?" That was something the Principality feared the most. Therefore if any such people ever appeared they would thoroughly put pressure on them.

But now, with the death of Gaius VIII in battle, the royal family lost their influence. It was during that kind of time that Soma launched his broadcast and taught the citizens that there was such a thing as freedom of expression. That self expression is allowed. If you have something to say then you can say it. Sing what songs you want to sing, draw what pictures you want to draw, tell what stories you want to tell. That nobody could bind you from doing that.

“Even if the crown prince Julius were reinstated after this, he wouldn’t be able to rule like before. The people knew the joy of expressing themselves already. He would need to suppress people to take that away”

“And he would lose the hearts of the people even more ... huh”

Carla sighed and leaned on the iron bars.

“I think I understand now what Soma said about [A King’s work happens before and after the war]. He ... he’s still fighting even now, isn’t he”

“Fighting ... yes ... that’s why Soma didn’t choose me but Aisha as a partner”

Liscia also sighed and leaned against the iron bars. The two now sat back to back with the bars in between them.

“I’m happy that he didn’t want to see me hurt, but I’m a bit jealous. I’d like it if he relied on me more ...”

“... That’s what they call being cherished, isn’t it?”

“I wonder about that”

“It is. He said he didn’t want you guys to hear him say something weak in battle. Grandmother said once that men are creatures who are stubborn when it comes to those important to them”

“R, really ... ah, but, he said it to you Carla?”

“I’m nobody important to him. I defied him after all”

“Carla, Soma is ...!”

Liscia turned around but lost the words to say when she saw Carla. Her usually determined face was nowhere to be found, and a somewhat lonely, understandingly calm one took its place.

“I know Liscia. During the battle, I saw how heavy what he was carrying on his back was. He’s not a false king. He’s a true, proper King. His highness the previous King and Liscia were right. I was the one who didn’t understand”

“Then, if you understand ...”

“I can’t accept your mediation exactly because I understand”

“Carla!”

Liscia stood up and hit at the iron bars.

“Do you know how much Lady Walter and I ...”

“It’s not about that, Liscia”



To the exasperated Liscia, Carla silently shook her head. She then hugged her knees in both arms and said with a strained voice.

“... I’m scared”

“Scared?”

“Yes ... I’m scared. I understood Soma’s greatness and was scared. Being let alive to realize my powerlessness ...”

Carla actually shivered as she said that. Carla, who would fearlessly rode atop wyverns to high heights under a hail of arrows shivered like a child from thunder.

“Powerlessness?”

“Yes, powerlessness. We with the blood of dragons are afraid of being powerless whether we want to or not. Do you know Liscia? Dragons only let the masters they trust ride on their backs. Yet at the same time they were deathly afraid of not being of use to their masters”

“I’ve ... heard about it. Illness or accidents aside, if the master dies before the dragon in battle, the dragon will be sure to follow them to death”

In actuality, Liscia knew of it as little more than rumor, but all of Elfrieden’s flying knights rode wyverns, and knights who made contracts with dragons only exist in the Star Dragon Mountains, a country up in the north. That’s why she didn’t know how true the rumor was, but Carla said it was true.

“That’s not all of it. If they lost their wings in battle and could no longer be of use to their masters, powerless, they would soon weaken and die. ... we Dragonewts were born between those dragons and the knights. The fear of being powerless is in our blood. Not so deep that we’d weaken and die ... but it’s still frightening”

“Carla’s not powerless in any way right? You’re much stronger than me”

“What Soma wanted ... is not a fighter, right. His fights are outside the field of battle. I don’t have what it takes to follow him there”

Carla said that as she smiled in ridicule at herself. As she smiled, tears oozed out of the corners of her eyes. Unable to bear it, Liscia said.

“But the fights are still not over! He’ll still need a fighter’s strength!”

“No ... I figured it out at the last fight. There were no large battles in King Alberto’s time. In that time, the world had become a world that could no longer

be changed by a handful of fighters. Leadership is worth more than strength now, and wars are won by people who can send the right number of soldiers to the right fields”

“.....”

“Even Father would still have more use. Despite his personality he could move the Air Force like his own arms and legs. The most I could manage are a hundred people”

“Is that bad?”

“You can easily find replacements for someone like that. I ... I can’t even find a reason to let myself live. ... I never knew I was this useless”

“Carla ...”

“... If I was let to live, I’d be crushed by the sense of powerlessness. So at least, let me ...”

Carla then faced Soma’s image on the broadcast. She kneeled and bowed.

“Let me humbly accept the King’s judgement”



“Now then everyone, let’s welcome the star of our show today. Juna Doma with [Mou Hitotsu no Ashita]!”

Having announced the last song, I went away somewhere the broadcast wouldn’t catch me and there Aisha was waiting with a guarded look with Margarita who was on her knees. Noticing me come close, Margarita said vexedly.

“... King of Elfrieden. Did you know what I was going to do?”

“I had a guess. Somebody in my world did the same thing once”

“I see ... if there’s a precedent then my failure was a given”

Well, it was a movie, though. It was an old-ish musical, but my late Grandpa liked it and watched it over and over again. I put my hand on Margarita’s shoulder.

“Your expressiveness and voice that weren’t any use in the Amidonian military are really excellent. What say you? Will you be a songstress in our country? Like, as an R&B singer”

“... Such warm words for a defeated general, I’m greatly sorry. I don’t know what

this ar-en-bi is but it might be alright for a failure of a soldier such as me”  
“Yeah, we want as many singers as we can get. You’d be welcome”

As I said that, Margarita’s grim smile turned into a stiff smile.

“... Let me think on it for a little while”



[Character Sketch: Margarita Wanda]

At this point in time Margarita Wanda hesitated to answer, but she would later unveil her debut as the R&B singer from Amidonia. The husky voice that was the highlight of her singing voice were popular mainly with the middle aged and above crowd. Also, her gutsy and hearty character that rivals men forged in the battlefield were well received by the audience, and she would go on to host several shows, becoming a mainstay of Elfriedenian showbiz.

## Interlude: Ishidzuka-sama

Whether it was in the Kingdom's Capital 『Parnam』 or the Dukedom's Capital 『Van』, the King's job never changes. Scanning the documents that Hakuya had brought to the government affairs room and then signing them over. After we had occupied Van, the workload that needed to be done had also increased. The amount of paperwork that had been amassed for several days due to the music program plan was painful to see. Even after working from sunrise to sunset and fully utilizing 『Living Poltergeist』, the accumulated stacks of documents by no means decreased. In the end, even in Van, I slept on a bed placed in the corner of the room, so I could immediately go to work after waking up.

「There are many rooms in the castle, so why did you turn this room into your bedroom?」(Liscia)

Liscia, who was helping in the paperwork besides me, spoke out in amazement at how I got to work as soon as I woke up, day after day, constantly staring at the documents that were piled up on the desk underneath the morning rays that slipped through into the room.

「Since in the end, I can concentrate on working from morning to evening this way. There is no reason to make another room just for me to sleep in. Really, even though Elfrieden's matters had settled down, Van's capitulation made the work multiply again. Is this a black company?[1]」(Souma)

「Don't say something that is incomprehensible. Here, the next document.」  
(Liscia)

「Yeah.....Eh? This again?」(Souma)

Receiving the document, I sighed after skimming over it. The content was 「The citizens of Van said that they want to hold an outdoor music concert in the plaza, may this be permitted?」. Even today, I had processed numerous petitions with similar contents in them. Either it was about a music concert, theatrical play, art exhibition, calligraphy exhibition, or circus troupes, it covered a wide range of different forms of entertainment. It seems that thanks to that broadcast, the citizens of Van had become conscious about self-expression in the arts. This situation is,

「Cultural revival movement Renaissan~ce ♪」[2](Souma)

「.....What are you saying all of sudden?」(Liscia)

「.....It's nothing.」(Souma)

Liscia looked at me coldly. Yeah, in order to make this gag come true, first I must make the phrase『Amidonian Renaissance』 become an established name. Well, the original Renaissance was an act to escape from the influence of Christianity and to revive the culture based on the humanism of Ancient Greece and Rome, but perhaps in Amidonia's case, the cultural revival was more about freeing themselves from the military-first doctrine and glorifying the arts and culture.

「But you know... Even if they are latecomers in the arts, their awakening is too much.」(Souma)

To be honest, I really want them to spare me from their incessant desire to hold events related to the arts. This place was, more or less, an occupied town, after all. There is a possibility that an event where a lot of people are gathered could be used to brew a conspiracy or become a target of a terror act, that's why there was a need to check each and every single event. Well, this was also

something that I wanted.

「We couldn't help it, right? After all, the broadcast was eye-opening, right? These kind of things have been considerably suppressed until now.」(Liscia)

「You're right..... A military nation wouldn't permit something like self-expression.」(Souma)

Even if there is just a short sentence written in a book that is negative towards the government, it would be a target for book burning. Just by singing a song that advocated peace, someone could be imprisoned. If there was a play that was a satire of the government, the troupe leader would be publicly executed..... Amidonia's government is capable of doing anything without hesitation. That's why the people's excited attitude towards art was a backlash against the previous regime's acts.

「Thanks to that my workload ended up increasing.」(Souma)

「No complaining. This is much better than open rebellion, right?」(Liscia)

「Well, yeah..... Perhaps I need to establish a bureau for events related services soon. I will appoint Margarita as the bureau chief and make her deal with all the tasks related to the event.」(Souma)

「That's good..... But you need to do the paperwork for that.」(Liscia)

「\*urrgh\*.....」(Souma)

In the end, no matter what I do, my work won't decrease. Just like that, I continued working until the afternoon without any changes. When my stomach became empty and I told Liscia about taking a break for a meal, Poncho Ishidzuka, the Minister that was responsible for matters relating to food, entered the room. Poncho's perfectly round stomach shook when he stood before me and he made a bow with a nervous expression.

「U-umm, Your Majesty, can I have a bit of your time?」(Poncho)

He was chattering his teeth. Even if he looks like this, his all-around competence related to food problems had played an active part in my plan, and so I personally appointed him as a close associate, as someone in this kingdom that I acknowledged his superiority in his field. That's way, I beg of you, I wish for you to act more at ease when standing in front of me.....

「Did something happen?」(Souma)

「Ah, yes! There is something that I want Your Majesty to see, yes!」(Poncho)

After saying this, Poncho took out something from his bag and then placed it on the desk.

「Something that you want him to see..... A flower?」(Liscia)

Liscia, who saw it from my side, tilted her head. Yes, what Poncho had taken out was a flower stem. That flower had an appearance similar to a lily. However, the petal's color, was colored in a marbled colors of pink, yellow and light brown, giving off a poisonous shade. If this was a mushroom, then it would be something that mustn't be eaten. Although, there was an American candy colored like this (prejudice).[3]

「What is this?」(Souma)

「Y-yes! This is a flower called 『Bewitching Susanna』[4], yes!」(Poncho)

「Ah, Susanna means a lily,[5] but what's with the “bewitching” part?」(Souma)

「Actually, this flower has a strong hallucinogenic effect, just by inhaling, it

could make someone fall into a condition similar to a sleep-walking state.[6] It is mostly grown gregariously in mountainous region. In the past, there was an incident where an army division, that inhaled their pollen when marching close to the flower field, was annihilated after falling from the cliff, chasing over a nonexistent enemy army.」(Poncho)

「Scary!」(Souma)

Wasn't this something that you could consider to be an illegal substance?

「Or rather, why did you bring something like this to this place!?」(Souma)

「I-it's fine. The pollen has already been removed.」(Poncho)

「.....Then it will be alright, I guess.」(Souma)

「Also the effect won't appear if it's only inhaling the pollen from several flowers. But if it is a place where several hundred flowers were growing, then even putting a cloth to cover the nose and mouth would be futile..... Yes.」  
(Poncho)

Well, if it wasn't a high efficiency filter mask, then it would be hard to completely remove the pollen. Well I don't have it, but someone with hay fever would have a hard time if it's only with a normal mask.[7]

「Then, did you want to show this flower to me?」(Souma)

「No, Your Majesty. This flower is just something like an extra. What I wanted to show to Your Majesty is this, yes.」(Poncho)

When he said this, Poncho took out something that rolled on the table. This is..... a vegetable? Its appearance was white, round, rugged, and had numerous cloves like a leek or garlic that was crowded like a pinecone.[8]



「This is?」(Souma)

「This is the bulb of the 『Bewitching Susanna』, yes」(Poncho)

「Bulbs... Ah, lily root!」(Souma)

「Hyaa! .....What's with you, suddenly yelling...」(Liscia)

When I suddenly yelled, Liscia became surprised. I had unconsciously become excited at the sudden appearance of a high class ingredient. Eh? This is lily root? I have seen a fragment of them used for the chawanmushi[9], but this is the first time I've seen it in its bulbous state. Certainly, it had the same taste like that of a potato.

「.....Then, what of it, Poncho Ishidzuka Paramedic?」[10](Souma)

「I-it's Panacotta.」(Poncho)

「Can it be eaten?」(Souma)

「Yes, this is certainly edible. These roots don't have any hallucinogenic effects.」(Poncho)

「Then what about the taste?」(Souma)

「If it is boiled, it will have this delicious soft and flaky texture. Then these 『Bewitching Susannas』 are growing everywhere in large numbers in the Amidonian mountainous region.」(Poncho)

This is good. Lily roots certainly contain carbohydrates. It can be used as a staple food just like potato. If we could harvest this, then wouldn't it become a breakthrough to settle the food shortage in Amidonia?

「However, we can't approach the location where the plants were growing due to the pollen, right?」(Souma)

「Yes, furthermore we couldn't harvest them outside the pollen season as the

toxin spread into the bulbs. That's why it's not an Amidonian custom to eat this, yes.」(Poncho)

「Then it will be impossible, right?」(Souma)

Even if it's edible, if it can't be harvested, then there is no point in..... eh? Wait a minute? Then how could there be a bulb right here? Poncho immediately took out a map and pointed at the northeastern region of the Grand Chaos Empire.

「The people, who lived in the mountainous region in the Grand Chaos Empire, harvested Bewitching Susannas and ate it as their staple food. They used a special harvesting method, yes.」(Poncho)

「Harvesting method?」(Souma)

「They are using Pongos, yes.」[11](Poncho)

Pongos..... In other words, apes? Poncho nodded.

「The Pongos that lived in the mountain have a resistance to the Bewitching Susanna's pollen. It seems that these Pongos dug the Bewitching Susanna's bulbs and ate it on a routinely basis. The mountain people in the Empire tamed these Pongos and made them harvest the bulbs.」

I see, it was similar to the cormorants used in cormorant fishing.[12] It seems to be difficult to tame and train them..... but our country have someone who is an expert in this field.

「Do those Pongos also live in Amidonia?」(Souma)

「Yes. They are inhabiting a mountain near Van. I already asked Tomoe-dono to do negotiations with the Pongos. Since it was well known that Pongos love alcoholic drinks, I believed that they would gladly working if we paid them with

casks of alcohol as their wage.」(Poncho)

「.....It's a good thing that the work will progress quickly.」

So not only had I made a Rhinoceros Reserve, but also an Neva Ape Army[13]? Before long, Elfrieden Kingdom would literally become an Animal Kingdom. HAHAHA.....

「.....Listen, Liscia.」(Souma)

「What?」(Liscia)

「This plan is dangerous, if you think so then we can stop it, right?」(Souma)

「.....」(Liscia)

But she resolutely turned her face away as if to say, don't demand an opinion for this from me.



By the way, one week (8 days) later, among the food rations that were distributed to Van, was a dumpling that was made from Bewitching Susannas' bulbs (popular name: 『Susanna's root』[14]). This dumpling, that can either be boiled or fried, became renowned as delicious, and took a role in pacifying the hearts of the occupied people. And then, in Van's food culture using Susanna's root, Poncho, who had been helping to distribute this dumpling, was respected by the housewives that lived in Van, as if he was some kind of deity. They called him 『Ishidzuka-sama』. Perhaps one day he would be deified, just like Biliken-san in Japan[15].

+++++

[1] A black company (ブラック企業 Burakku kigyō), also referred to in English as a black corporation or black business, is a Japanese term for an exploitative

sweatshop-type employment system. While the term "sweatshop" is associated with manufacturing, and the garment trade in particular, in Japan, black companies are not necessarily associated with the clothing industry, but more often with office work.

[2] Souma is mimicking Hige Danshaku (a manzai duo), their gag catchphrase is ルネッサン~~ス, as you can see they prolonged the word ending.

Just see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FkNPbIQ7Bcs>

Please Souma, stop making obscure references that is hard for non-Japanese to understand.

[3] I think Souma means “marbled candy”.

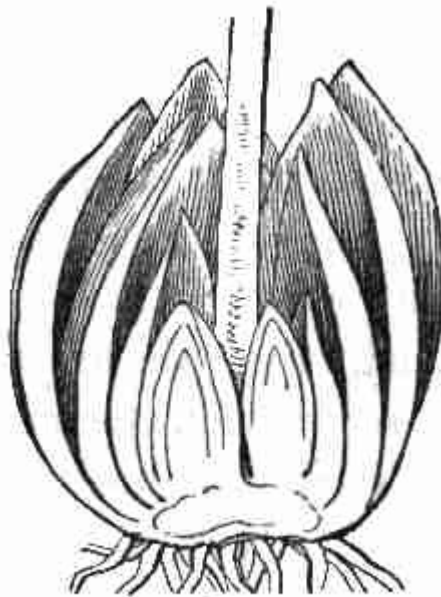
[4] 幻惑リリー (Genwaku Ririi)

[5] In the raw, Souma comment thatリリー (Ririi) is actually 百合 (Yuri), the Japanese words for lily. Since I can't find any ancient English words nor synonyms for Lily, I change the sentence so it would make sense in English. Bewitching Susanna came from shoshan, the Hebrew word for Lily. I can use Greek: Keiron or Leiron, too. (E/N: Maybe Susanna. Ancient Egypt is older than Ancient Greece. Plus Bewitching Susanna feels like a reference to the poisonous Belladonna, which has a harmless Lily version, too.) Just like that, for the rest of the story リリー will be translated as Susanna (Other world's Lily) while 百合 will be translated as Lily (Earth's Lily).

[6] Fun fact, some lilies do have hallucinogenic effects. I don't recommend you to use them, though, as they are also poisonous. I don't want to have guilt if some of my readers died while trying to get high... (E/N: Pfft, westerners don't need lily roots to get high. That's what bath salts are for.) Ah, yeah I remember a doctor's joke about USA: It is easier to obtain methamphetamine to synthesize pseudoephedrine, than buying pseudoephedrine in the pharmacy. The irony.

[7] Use HEPA Mask for heavy anti-pollen duty! For people with low money, use a NIOSH N95 dust mask!

[8] Something that look like this



[9] Chawanmushi (茶碗蒸し, Chawanmushi, literally "tea cup steam" or "steamed in a tea bowl") is an egg custard dish found in Japan. Unlike many other custards, it is usually eaten as a dish in a meal. The custard consists of an egg mixture flavored with soy sauce, dashi, and mirin, with numerous ingredients such as shiitake mushrooms, kamaboko, yuri-ne (lily root), ginkgo and boiled shrimp placed into a tea-cup-like container. Just looking at their picture make me want to try...



(E/N: Low budget fast way of doing it is to dumping water & a beaten egg into a bowl & microwaving it. I usually use chopsticks to beat the egg.) My egg custard version is just egg, water, strained with maize flour, with cabbage, beans, and beansprout, put into a bowl and placed in the middle of boiling pot.

[10] パラメディック Paramedikku ⇨ パナコッタ Panakotta

[11] Actually, it's 猩猩 (Shoujou), a type of Japanese spirit, that was imported from a Chinese myth (also named 猩猩 or Xingxing), in the myth they are a furred ape that loves sake. Since translating it literally as : LIVE-LIVELY or just keep it as SHOUJOU is unsatisfactory to me, I went another route. Since 猩猩 was also the word used to refer to Orangutans (Pongo sp.) in Japanese, I will translate 猩猩 as PONGO(S), since Orangutans don't make sense, as Orangutans in Indonesian means: Forest Man/People and 猩猩 lived in the mountains. Calling it Orangunungs (Mountain Man/People) works too, though..... (E/N: Stick with Pongos for that Japanese fantasy feel lol.)

[12] Cormorant fishing: Using a bird (cormorant) that will catch fish in the water. The small fish will be eaten by the cormorant while the larger fish wouldn't be able to pass its throat as its throat where tied using a rope or leather cord. See this Acashic Record.

[13] I'm sorry I don't know what Souma refer to in this sentence. Perhaps he refer to Nikkou Monkey Troupe(日光猿軍団)? But what is Neva? Nevada? NERV?

[14] In actual Japanese, the term is Yuri-Ne百合根, but this sentence use Ririi-Ne リリ一根. Yuri-Ne is Lily's Root. While Ririi-ne is Susanna's Root.

[15] Okay... This is kinda weird. But just read this

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Billiken#Japan> .

To put in simply: A doll made in America, ended up being enshrined because of the doll's relationship to good fortune.

## Chapter 02 – In Town A

One month had passed since Elfrieden Kingdom's Army had captured Amidonia Dukedom's capital city 『Van』. At first, Van's Citizens thought that the occupation would be harsh. However, since Souma strictly supervised the soldiers' conduct, the city's public order was actually much better than before the occupation started. Thanks to the distribution of the Susanna's root dumplings, the fear of hunger had also disappeared. The Citizens' wariness gradually wore down. The people that could fan the wind of rebellion: The Nobles and The Knights, had mostly escaped from the city already. Nowadays, the city's atmosphere had become completely pacified.

It would have been alright if it was only pacified, but Souma's broadcast of the 『Music Show』 had ignited the artistic passion of Van's citizens. It was to the point that troubadours sang on street corners, performers played their instruments or performed their street acts on the road. Furthermore, an increasing number of the houses quickly became vividly covered with colorful paints or had one of their walls decorated with a painting of the beautiful faces of the Lorelei Three Divas, Anchorwoman Chris, or the Program Host Aisha. It had become an uncontrolled situation. It had reached a point where it was difficult to believe that this town was a military town just one month ago.

What happened in Van was what Souma coined to be an 『Amidonian Renaissance』. It's just... the sudden change had caused a chaotic situation, so everyday there were disputes occurring as performers competed for the same street spot. The three armies: the Army, the Navy and the Air Force, that were camped outside the city, could only pity their comrades, the Royal Army's King's Guard that was stationed inside the city and tasked to settle those kinds of disputes. But then again, these disputes weren't something that could lead to a large-scale rebellion, so Van was generally very peaceful.





「P-princesssss~!」(Aisha)

「Kya~!」(Liscia)

However, on that day, there was a piercing voice. At that morning, Liscia was in her room that she used as a dressing room, and then, without even a single knock, Aisha hurriedly rushed into the room. Her sudden appearance made Liscia stand still from surprise, but Liscia remembered that she was in the middle of changing and was half-naked. Then, she put on her usual military uniform while throwing questions at Aisha.

「What happened, Aisha? Why are you that panicked?」(Liscia)

「T-that is because..... His Majesty..... His Majesty has.....」(Aisha)

Perhaps because Aisha was out of breath, her speech was disordered.

「Calm down. Now, take a deep breath.」(Liscia)

「Y-yes..... Hu-.....fuuh~」(Aisha)

Just like how Liscia suggested, Aisha took a deep breath and finally calmed down.

「So, what's wrong with Souma?」(Liscia)

「Yes, actually, when I visited His Majesty to give my morning greeting, I

entered the government affairs office that His Majesty utilized as his personal room, however, His Majesty was nowhere to be seen..... Then, there was a letter that he had left behind.」(Aisha)

Aisha held out a sheet of paper, which Liscia received and read. It was written with these words: 『I will go for a journey. Please don't look for me. Souma Kazuya』[1]. When Liscia put her hand on her forehead and sighed, Aisha became panicked again.

「W-what should we do? We need to quickly find him or-」(Aisha)

「That's why I told you to calm down. Today is Souma's day off.」(Liscia)

「Eh? Day off?」(Aisha)

「That's right.」(Liscia)

Liscia nodded towards Aisha who made a blank expression.

「Since he had been swamped by work lately, his mental condition is barely holding on the edge, so I advised him to take a day off. I also received Hakuya's proper permission. Also, since Souma was saying something unhealthy like 『Then I will be relaxing in my room and creating dolls』, I asked Tomoe to forcibly drag him out to the outside.」(Liscia)

「I didn't hear any of this! Am I not His Majesty's bodyguard!? Why was I not informed of this!?」(Aisha)

Aisha's eyes became teary. Lishia shrugged her shoulders and shook her head.

「Because you are too conspicuous. This is a country centered on the Human Race, so Dark Elves are naturally rare, plus your face was also broadcasted a few days ago, so you aren't suited for travelling incognito.」(Liscia)

「However, this place is former enemy territory, right!? If something happened to His Majesty and Tomoe, then.....」(Aisha)

「Don't worry. Souma and Tomoe disguised themselves, furthermore they are shadowed by Juna-san and elite Marines to protect them, so they will be safe.」  
(Liscia)

「Juna-dono is also together with them? In that case, it will surely be... safe.....」  
(Aisha)

Aisha stopped her words as she remembered Juna's mature smile. Juna is Aisha's concept of an ideal woman. Beautiful, elegant, strong, and kind; a wonderful person who makes anyone unconsciously go: "Ah, I want to be like her." However..... be that as it may, while being reminded by Juna's smile, Aisha was alarmed by her own lack of feminine aspects. She shouldn't let her guard down. If she was negligent, then she would end up losing all the delicious things, so she persuaded herself.

「.....Will it..... really be safe?」(Aisha)

「.....」(Liscia)

Actually, Liscia was also thinking the same thing as Aisha, so she couldn't reply back.



「What nice weather this is. Right, Nii-sama?[2]」(Tomoe)

「I agree, Tomoe-chan.」(Souma)

I am now walking while holding Tomoe-chan, my Mythic Wolf Race stepsibling, passing through Van's shopping road that was dazzling under the morning light.

Since I had been working to death in the government affairs office lately, Liscia, who couldn't let this continue, advised me to take a full day off-slash-inspection around the capital. Although, I considered spending my day off rolling around lazily in my room just like a father enjoying his holiday, I was told "It's unhealthy!", and so Tomoe-chan, who had received Liscia's order, drag me out to the outside.

As expected, since this city was former enemy territory, we were lightly disguised. Since my appearance looks like someone from the Nine Headed Dragon Archipelago, I wore the garbs of a traveler from that country with a travelling coat and a conical hat,[3] just like the appearance of a certain North Wind Youngster[4]. Meanwhile, Tomoe-chan had an appearance like a White Mage from a certain game[5], with her head covered by the mantle's hood. In this appearance, our face were difficult to be seen. Although, I did question whether we really needed to be in disguise like this,

「Whoa, there are a lot of shops, Nii-sama.」(Tomoe)

.....after seeing how Tomoe-chan was in high spirits, I thought: Well, whatever.  
[6]

「If there is a shop that piques your interest, should we visit it?」(Souma)

「Yes♪」(Tomoe)

I gently patted Tomoe-chan's head who replied energetically. Hah..... I am healed..... The rustling wolf's ears' fur that was soft to the touch made my feelings feel better. I also called out to a person that was located opposite from Tomoe-chan.

「Juna-san, will this alright for you?」(Souma)

「Yes. If this is what Kazuya-san wills.」(Juna)

Juna-san replied while smiling. For travelling incognito this time, instead of Aisha who has a conspicuous appearance, it was Juna-san and the ten elite Marines who will be protecting me from the shadows..... Yup, from the shadows.....

「Umm, Juna-san?」(Souma)

「Yes, what it is?」(Juna)

「.....Why are you entwining your arms with me?」(Souma)

While my right hand is patting Tomoe-chan's head, my left hand was being entwined by both of Juna-san's arms. She was really close. Today, Juna-san was carrying a longsword and wearing a breastplate atop of her cloth dress, so her appearance was similar to that of an ordinary female adventurer. I didn't feel any voluptuous texture[7], but my hand was warm from the direct contact. Juna-san then made a impish smile at the flustered me.

「Ah, I can't do this?」(Juna)

「It doesn't mean that you can't do this, but..... Didn't you say you would protect me from the shadows?」(Souma)

「We are properly protecting you. Even now, the elite Marines are protecting you while undercover. They are being on guard at the place that is anticipated to be a blind spot.」(Juna)

「Even so..... Isn't Juna-san's face well known?」(Souma)

The Amidonian Citizens already knew Juna-san's face from the music show. Even if it wasn't to the extent as the dark elf Aisha's conspicuousness, won't there still be someone that can recognize Juna-san's face right now? When I

mentioned this to her, Juna-san answered while smiling.

「It's alright. At that time I was wearing makeup, so the impression is different.」(Juna)

Now that she said it, Juna-san only wore minimalist makeup today. As a diva, she might need “enchanted makeup” when standing on stage or in front of the broadcast orb. But even now, Juna-san was naturally beautiful, without makeup she looked three years younger. Now she looks just like her age.

「That's right..... I look older thanks to the make-up.」(Juna)

「No, there is also your demeanor..... Or rather, you are bothered by it, nonetheless.」(Souma)

「I am a woman, after all..... Your Majesty, do you hate linking arms with me?」  
(Juna)

Juna-san showed a slightly uneasy expression. Her face..... How unfair.....[8]

「How can I hate it. I highly like it.」(Souma)

「Fufufu, Thank you very much.」(Juna)

「Hafu..... As expected, Juna-san is so beautiful. I yearn to become like Juna-san.」(Tomoe)

「.....I think Tomoe-chan is better staying as the current Tomoe-chan?」  
(Souma)

I disagree with Tomoe-chan who was looking at Juna-san with sparkling eyes. Tomoe-chan is also a cute girl, so she would grow up into a beautiful woman just like Juna-san..... That's why I beg to you, please always stay as the pure Tomoe-

In the end, I walked with my right hand holding Tomoe-chan's hand, while my left arm entwined with Juna-san's. Even though, my true identity wouldn't be found out in this way, but in exchange, the envious look from men and the women whispering about what kind of relationship we three had were painful to endure. As I tried not to think about this, I began conversing with Juna-san.

「By the way, since Van didn't have different establishments than Parnam did and since I also don't have any places I want to inspect either, did you have a place you wanted to go?」(Souma)

「When they said that you would go outside to inspect the town for your day off, I had thought of something.」(Juna)

Juna-san made a wry smile at my workaholic thinking. Then, Juna-san made a quick glance in Tomoe-chan's direction and whispered in a voice that only I could hear.

(「In that case, let's find a present like a cloth for Tomoe-chan. Since she is an imouto[10], then it will be a present from a family member.」) (Juna)

(「Ah, that sounds good.」) (Souma)

Now that she mentioned it, since I was always occupied in the government affairs office, I haven't done anything as a brother for her as an imouto (to be accurate, she is Liscia's imouto, so she will be my future sister in law). Even during those times, Tomoe-chan was doing her best in negotiating with the Rhinosaurs and the Pongos. To pay this debt to her, I might need to do my best today in spoiling her as much as possible.

(「Juna-san, do you know any place that has the right shop?」)

(「I already did the research. Please leave it to me.」)

Juna-san made a soft smile.



The shop that Juna-san recommended was a largish clothing store on a certain street corner. The smallish signboard was written with a stylish font with words that meant 『Silver Deer Shop』. From the lined up merchandise on the display window, it seems that not only do they sell clothes, but shoes and ornaments, too. I didn't really understand with my untrained eyes, but the quality of the goods seemed to be high, so this was a high-class shop. It was a shop that was foreign for someone like me who only ever wore clothes sold by mass retailers back in Japan.[11]

By the way, ever since coming to this country, I never experienced wearing something other than what I made myself. Since recently my sewing skill had increased from creating and maintaining Musashi Boy-kun dolls, except for the underwear, all the clothes I wore was something that I made. Although as someone that technically had a high salary and could make an order for custom-made clothing, I didn't feel any desire for such luxury again (that being the case, I invested quite a lot into Musashi Boy-kun for self-protection). Even the shirt and pants that I wore under this coat were of my own creation.

「Nii-sama even made something like this, Nii-sama is amazing.」(Tomoe)

「Well since there are no shops that sell clothing that I'm comfortable with. Well, half of it is because of my hobby.」(Souma)



I felt proud at receiving Tomoe-chan's respectful look.

「But, how unexpected. For a fashion shop like this to exist in Amidonia.」  
(Souma)

「It's because of Kazuya-san's influence. During the music show, Kazuya-san had demonstrated that Amidoniam women may dress nicely now since they are now part of the Elfrieden Kingdom. If there is a demand, then the business will appear.」(Juna)

「But as an occupied city, there should be a shortage of goods, right?」(Souma)

「Since there is a Commerce Guild in the city. In the first place, excluding the food that was in the shortage, the Guild was coordinating the supply of the goods. For the merchants, they are suppliers for the clients, whether the clients are the Elfrieden Kingdom or the Amidonia Dukedom.」(Juna)

Juna-san elucidated this fact for me.

「That's the way things go, huh?.....」(Souma)

「Yes. Accordingly, the merchants have weak feelings of belonging to any country.」(Juna)

「Well, that couldn't be helped, right?」(Souma)

Even if we kept talking in front of the shop, it would be useless, so we entered the shop and a grey-haired middle aged man who wore a bartender-like outfit greeted us. Before we knew it, the black-tea scented dandy middle aged man, stood with closed legs, put his hand over his chest and made a courtesy bow.

「Welcome. Is this gentlemen a traveler?」(Dandy Old Man)

At those questions, my words became plugged. Revealing our true identity is out of the question, but how could we explain about the combination of a man in a conical hat, a beautiful adventurer and furthermore a wolf-girl in a white hood? While I was thinking about how to answer this, Juna-san stepped forward.

「Yes. This gentleman is Kazuya-sama, a young master from a silk crepe[12] store in the Echigo Kingdom, one of the nations in the Nine Headed Dragons Archipelago Union. This girl is his imouto, Tomoe-sama. Then, I am someone that they employed to accompany them, please call me “Silvia”. Kazuya-sama is someone who will succeed the store and he is travelling to various countries to broaden his knowledge.」(Juna)

She naturally made a smooth speech. Or rather, she still remembered my random talking as a young master from a silk crepe store in the Echigo Kingdom that I had said when I came visiting while on a date with Liscia. Even though I had completely forgotten about what I had said at that time. Also, who is Silvia? The dandy middle-aged man didn't made any particular expressions and just calmly nodded and muttered,

「I see. I am sorry to be late at introducing myself. I am Sebastian, the manager of this shop.」(Sebastian)

「.....」(Souma)

I thought for a moment, isn't that the name usually used by a butler? But then I changed my mind as I remembered that Sebastian isn't really an exclusive butler name. Sebastian continued his words.

「Well then, what are Sir and Madam looking for today?」(Sebastian)

「Let's see..... For now I am looking for something that suits my imouto.」  
(Souma)

「Eh!?!」(Tomoe)

I place my hand on the surprised Tomoe-chan's head and gently patted her.

「Well just like I said before, please tell me if there is anything that piques your interest.」(Souma)

「Umm.....But.....」(Tomoe)

「It's alright. Let me do something like an older brother sometimes.」(Souma)

After I said these words, Tomoe-chan immediately turned her sight towards Juna-san, who then nodded and took Tomoe-chan's hand as they begun looking at the merchandise. Although she was stiff, Tomoe-chan is still a girl, and as she looked at the merchandise with Juna-san, it could be seen that she gradually became engrossed in them. I observed the sight of a beautiful woman and a cute girl going 'kyakya ufufu' and enjoying their shopping for some time before I began to look over the goods, too.

Clothing, shoes and decorations, furthermore there were also cosmetics. This shop really sold many different types of merchandise. It was as if this place was the Amidonian version of 109 (I never went to 109 in Shibuya, though)[13]. Even though the women had become fashion conscious, perhaps since it wasn't the age where men pursued fashion, 80% of the store floor was dedicated to women's apparel. It seems that this shop only sold great coats for the men's wear.

There was several types of merchandise that drew my interest. The first was lipstick. They ranged from a pink color to a lighter color. The second was hair ornaments. It was made from gold with a small gem that looked considerably magnificent, even so it had ladybug motif that looked childish and created an unbalanced feel. The third was a choker. The bluish leather background was

inlaid with silver foil stars, and the gold clasp part was depicting a bird (phoenix?) opening its wings, so it looked luxurious.

While I was looking around like this, I found myself in the front of a small loafer for girls. It had a ribbon motif and a brooch attached to it that made it looks really cute. I wonder if this loafer suits Tomoe-chan somehow.

「Hey, Tomo-」(Souma)

「Sir customer.」(Sebastian)

When I was about to call out to Tomoe, Sebastian addressed me from behind. I looked back suspiciously and Sebastian bowed.

「I am sorry for my sudden discourtesy. But Kazuya-sama, may I ask you something?」(Sebastian)

「..... What is it?」(Souma)

「Let's suppose you are on the battlefield and are having a war council with gathered generals.」(Sebastian)

Hah? Battlefield? War council? Why did he suddenly bring up this topic?

「Let's assume that the opinion that came at the beginning of that war council is a good idea. If you are the supreme commander, will you immediately adopt that idea?」(Sebastian)

「..... No I won't. I will wonder if there are any other good ideas.」(Souma)

「That's correct. That's why, if I am at the general's side, if I have some idea that I want to propose, I won't immediately reveal that idea and will wait until the discussion has reached the limit.」(Sebastian)

「Fumu[14].....」(Souma)

「What I wanted to say is, the bargaining of man and woman is also a battlefield.」(Sebastian)

「.....Ah, I see.」(Souma)

Finally, I understood what Sebastian wanted to say. In other words, it is better for me to wait a bit longer before recommending the loafer that I thought suited Tomoe-chan. Certainly currently, Juna-san and Tomoe-chan were enjoying choosing the merchandise. If I brought something good to them, then I would end up throwing cold water on their pleasant atmosphere. If they chose what I endorsed, then their happy time would be over and if they didn't choose it, then we would end up in an awkward situation. Either situation wasn't something that we wanted to happen. I felt admiration towards Sebastian's attentiveness.

「You are.....a magnificent tactician.」(Souma)

「I feel honored to receive your praise.」(Sebastian)

Sebastian made a respectful bow. I unintentionally wanted to say, 「Hahaha, this guy.[15]」

「By the way, you used a war council as a reference..... Perhaps you know that we are.....」(Souma)

「Oh my..... Please excuse my rudeness. Actually, I only dealt with high class people until several days ago, so I still haven't removed the attitude towards them, so I ask for your apologies in case you feel offended. My regular client is a person who loves doing such conversation in this way.」(Sebastian)

「No, I don't mind it. Is that client perhaps a military man?」(Souma)

「No-no, that client is a really cute small raccoon type of person.」(Sebastian)

Small raccoon (sly person)..... eh? Even the raccoon manager called that person a small raccoon. I am interested. But anyway, I stealthily bought several goods without being seen by Juna-san and Tomoe-chan.



When we left 『Silver Deer Shop』 it was already past lunch time.

「Ah, Juna-san. Please wait a minute.」(Souma)

While we were walking to find a place for us three to eat, I called out to Juna-san to stop.

「Is there something that happened?」(Juna)

「This is something that I want to give to Juna-san.」(Souma)

Juna-san tilted her head, 「What is it?」 as I took out a small package. Juna-san received and opened the package, the content was the ladybug-shaped hair ornament.

「Ah, this is.....」(Juna)

「This is the compensation for Juna-san for becominng a shadow under the sun today.」(Souma)

「But.....」(Juna)

「Please take it.」(Souma)

I then took the hair ornament and then put it in Juna-san's hair. Hm, just like I

thought. The design was too childish for the usual adult-like Juna-san, but for today's younger Juna-san, it was as if she was a girl pretending to be an adult. Extremely lovely.

「It really suits you. “Juna”.[16]」(Souma)

「!? Uuu.....」(Juna)

Although she behaved in adult-like manners, Juna-san made a rarely seen bright flushed red face. Finally I dealt one point[17] to the adult-like Juna-san. Juna-san then turned her face away.

「Your Majesty, if Your Majesty gives a present to a woman, please also give something as well to Princess. It has been decided that Your Majesty would marry several women, right? In doing so, you must not be partial. Whether Your Majesty desires to love all the women equally or is just doing political marriages and doesn't love all the women from the bottom of your heart, in any case, it is also an important task for Your Majesty to not let any friction arise between the women.....」(Juna)

She was rapidly talking on and on..... Perhaps this was her being embarrassed?

「It's alright. I also properly bought something for Liscia and Aisha.」(Souma)

Whether in pretty decorations or her usual clothing (even on the battlefield), Liscia preferred things that wouldn't hinder her movements, so I chose the blue leather choker that was stylish yet wouldn't restrict her. Just like Juna-san, I had also been helped by Aisha before, so I chose a lipstick that suited her healthy tanned skin. This was something that I noticed when I hosted the music show, but she seems to be concerned for her femininity.

「That's why, don't worry.」(Souma)

「I-Is that right?」(Juna)

「Yes. By the way, Juna-san?」(Souma)

「.....Yes, what is it?」(Juna)

「It's not "Your Majesty", but it should be "Kazuya-sama", right?」(Souma)

「Ah.....」(Juna)

Just now, Juna-san referred me as Your Majesty not as Kazuya-sama. As expected, that rapid talking was her way to hide her embarrassment. Juna-san made a sullen red face.

「Kazuya-sama..... You are unexpectedly mischievous.」(Juna)

「Is that so?」(Souma)

「Yes. Furthermore, you are an expert in seducing.」(Juna)

While saying so, once more she entwined my left arm. This time, her embrace was a bit stronger than before. When I looked over my shoulder, Juna-san was smiling and the head ornament atop her was shining with a sparkle.

+++++

[1] 旅に出ます。探さないでください。The standard cliché "Runaway Person's Letter" in Japanese fiction. It was so cliché that they made T-Shirt from these words...

[2] Nii-sama means "My respectful older brother". Just watch this:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7aDLksTDqcE>



[3] *insert bamboo whistle BGM* Souma looks like this:



This was also was a reference the footnote below.

[4] Referring to北風小僧の寒太郎 (Kitakaze Kozou no Kantarou) a Japanese children Enka song: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HMsS-xmHP7U>

[5] Final Fantasy!!!

[6] I demand an Illustration of Tomoe in White Mage Robe when Light Novel Volume 3 came out!

[7] You know what I mean. Juna-san wore a breastplate after all.

[9] I see that Souma is a follower of eternal loli faith.

[10] I don't know what the English word for imouto. What little sister? What's that?

[11] Like Uniqlo. So.. Souma is just like Maou Sadao...

[12] Actually, Chirimen = japanese silk crepe. Crepe in textile means a fabric

with crisp texture.

[13] A real department store in Shibuya, Tokyo.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/109\\_\(department\\_store\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/109_(department_store))

[14] Read Sayonara Ryuusei Konnichiwa Jinsei.

[15] Hoo boy... What Souma said is:「ハハハこやつめ」. This is a variant of a Japanese meme that came from a Sankokushi Manga referring to a dialogue between Cao Cao and Sima Yi.

Cao Cao: Then I will make a Palace that will be as high as the heavens (天).

Sima Yi: Although a high Palace is also splendid, but Your Majesty's age will also increase (昇った) and ascend to the Heavens (昇天 euphemism for death, see the pun?)

Cao Cao: This guy (yatsu is a derogatory, this bastard)! Hahaha

Sima Yi: Hahaha

The Japanese internet community then use Cao Cao's line as a response for the situation where a Lower Position does something rude (familiarily rude, not hostilely rude) to someone in a Higher Position, either through a joke or advice, but the Higher Position didn't feel angry and/or has a big heart. Example:

Teacher: Don't spend the Summer wasting time, alright!

Student: But, Sensei shouldn't spend the Summer alone, too.

Teacher: Hahaha, this guy. (the teacher would get into trouble for referring to the student as yatsu, though.)

[16] Souma didn't use the usual “-san” in Juna's name. This symbolizes that he treats Juna in a more familiar way. This is complicated...

[17] As in Kendo term. It means, Souma finally landed a hit.

## Chapter 02 – In Town B

“Uwaaa ... nii-sama, there are a lot of little shops”

Tomoe pranced around seeing the stalls lined up in the plaza. The place Juna took us for lunch was the plaza where the Royal Broadcast receiver was installed. It was nothing but a field just a month ago, but it was now crowded with stalls peddling food and goods. We could hear the peddlers calling for customers and the customers haggling even though we haven't yet set foot in the plaza.

There were also all kinds of people passing by. Housewives shopping for dinner, flocks of merchants having lunch, and off-duty Elfriedenian soldiers looking for something to eat 1. We could see travellers and adventurers, and also the figures of a lot of people from non-human races. It was bustling with men and women of all ages without regard to race, occupation, or nationality.

“... How did it turn into this?”

“Even though the food shortage in Vannes had been dealt with somewhat, there are still very few shop owners who have food to sell. However, people who thought they could at least open a stall have been gathering, so we're having Vannes' first market now”

I asked and Juna explained.

“This far out of the way? Shouldn't they rather do it on the main streets or something?”

“That would be because the Royal Broadcast receiver is here”

Ah, I see. It's not that people gathered because the shops are here, but the shops gathered here aiming for the people who gathered to see the Royal Broadcast. We had been broadcasting Chris Tachyon's news programme, which doubled as a test, during the day and the music programme at night almost every day since the music programme. So everyone must be coming here to see that. It's like a post-war black market here, or rather, it's like Ameyoko 2.

Incidentally, the Lorelei Juna only appeared in the music programme in weekends, whereas on other days, we have [Singing Contests] to gather aspiring applicants. It was a heavy burden since they're all broadcasted live. The candidates that passed the [Singing Contests] became [Singers] like Margarita, or if they also had a good appearance, they became [Lorelei] or [Orpheus 3].

The Broadcasts were simulcasted to both Elfrieden and Amidonia, so anyone can see them anywhere there's a broadcast receiver. Not to mention Amidonia, but every town in Elfrieden should have turned like this by now. I suppose I should calculate the effect on the economy later. I was grinning with that in mind when Tomoe pulled on my travel coat 4.

"Nii-sama, I'm hungry"

"Oh, right. We should go buy something at a stall I suppose"

"Yes!"

"I concur"

The three of us then browsed the stalls around the plaza. All in all, four out of every ten shops sell food, two handle accessories, two deal in equipment, and the rest sell other things. Most of the ones who sell food sell skewered grills. Since Vannes was far from the sea all they could get were river fish; grains and vegetables were low in stock. So on that point, the meat would be slaughtered

wild animals. They must be grilling game they caught outside the walls. For that reason, none of the stalls could say what meat they were selling. Rather than putting a sheep's head on dog meat 5, they were putting a mystery head on mystery meat.

"I think getting grilled meat's going to be a gamble ..."

Wild rabbit meat is fine, but great rat or great lizard meat ... would whittle down on my SAN points. Also, if they were hunting whatever they could find nearby, they wouldn't know what poisons or pathogens or parasites it had, right. This world didn't have food hygiene laws and they didn't need licenses to be cooks ... I suppose I should put some in place when we have surplus food.

"It will be alright"

"Eh?"

Juna said with a 'really nice' smile.

"I had the escort marines go ahead and do poison-tasting. I will show you to the safe stalls"

"Poison-tasting!? You don't mean sampling do you!?"

"If anything happened to you it would be a big problem for the country, so of course the street food would at least be poison-tested. Your body doesn't only belong to you anymore, right?"

What am I, a pregnant lady? or so I would like to retort, but I get what she's trying to say. If I collapsed from food poisoning, I couldn't be sure I could still use Living Poltergeist. If I couldn't then nine me's worth of work would stop being done ... yep poison-tasting is necessary for the sake of the nation. Let's leave it at

that.

“... and the results are?”

“One person fell to stomach ache”

“Send a messenger to the palace! Put out a notice saying that all sellers of meat and fish are to be required to indicate their raw materials! If anyone put on misleading signage their business is to be suspended. Draw up the notice and publish it!”

“Understood”

Juna called a guard marine over and sent him to the palace with the message. It was the run that began Elfrieden’s Food Hygiene Law. I plan to extend the ingredients indication later, but for now I have to forestall people trying to camouflage meat. There are lives at stake when it comes to poisons and pathogens.

“Guardian marine. Your death would not be in vain”

“Um, he didn’t die. Just food poisoning”

Juna retorted in amazement. No no no, even food poisoning could kill, you know? My grandpa ate a raw egg past it’s best before date, caught salmonella and had to be hospitalized for days once. Thankfully it didn’t turn out too bad, but it cost him several thousands in hospital fees just because he didn’t want to waste a ten-yen-a-box egg. Grandma teased him about it for a long while afterwards. Well, that aside, we bought grilled skewers at a stall Juna recommended and some mixed juice at a fruit stall. We sat down on a bench and ate.

“Hmm nom nom ... mm, it’s tasty, nii-sama”

“Yeah. This meat goes down easy”

“The juice is good too, Kazuya-san”

The meat was nice and juicy. It didn't taste much different to a beef skewer you get in a festival, so I asked and it turned out to be made from Bigbull, a buffalo-like animal, meat. The mix juice was room temperature, but since it was autumn, it wasn't too warm. It was a little sour but it went well with the oily aftertaste of the skewered meat.

With our stomachs full, we took a breather and got into a slow mood. Tomoe began to nod off next to me so I supposed it was nap time for her. With my lap as a pillow, Tomoe curled her body into a ball and began snoring. I pat her head, it was fluffy, just like a dog's fur. It felt good in my hand.

“Fufu, she's cute isn't she”

Said Juna who was sitting next to me, watching Tomoe's face as she slept. She then leaned on to me until our shoulders touched and sadly muttered.

“If only these peaceful days could go on ...”

“... but that won't happen, would it?”

I asked and Juna gulped.

“Yes. The imperial army are already here. They number about fifty thousand”

“Fifty thousand? That's much fewer than I expected”

The number of Elfriedenian soldiers stationed in Vannes now was 45 thousand,

so we're about even. Of course, we're at a disadvantage if we took into account the number of Amidonian soldiers, but I thought they would at least take three times our numbers. The empire that was already fighting the Demon King Army would have a two front war in their hands if hostilities broke, so I didn't think they would attack, but the threat posed by bringing enough troops to capture Vannes would have been significant. Juna, however, shook her head.

"I think it was likely that Amidonia held them back. They must be afraid that by bringing a large army they could take over the whole country, just like that"

"The Empire backing the Humanity Declaration won't do that, right?"

If the Empire, who said there would be no changes to national borders, began an aggressive war, the Humanity Declaration would be as good as dead. They would lose the faith of the signatory nations and their strategy of uniting all of humanity against the Demon King Army would collapse.

"Amidonia had already acted against the Humanity Declaration. They would be nervous that while they were deceiving the Empire, the Empire decided to deceive them"

"... seriously, what a hopeless country"

After ignoring the Empire's intentions, they clung to their power once they got into trouble. To top it off, they didn't trust the partner they were hanging on to, that's hopeless, not just as a country, but as people. Nobody would respect opportunists and turncoats, no country would ever trust them.

"Well, it's good that it's to our advantage though"

"It sure is. Looking at Lord Julius, we were glad from the bottom of our hearts that our King was Soma. We can't entrust our lives to an untrustworthy person, after all"



“... I wish you didn’t put so much of your hopes on me, though”

“My, but aren’t you Kazuya-san now?”

She talked back full of playfulness. Must be revenge for my teasing her earlier. That’s Juna for you, when you thought you scored a point against her she’d get one back right away. The two of us looked at each other and smiled.

[Good afternoon everyone. It’s time for News Elfrieden]

Right that moment, Chris Tachyon’s voice suddenly came. Looks like the afternoon news programme had begun. We looked up and saw Chris’ figure reading the news in the mist being sprayed into the air. Ah, so this was how the broadcast looked to the people in town. This was the first time for me seeing it with the receiver installed at the water fountain, but it was about the size of a movie theater screen and had quite the impact. I want to see the music programme from here if I could.

[First, for current affairs. The new harbor town “Veneti Nova” recently under construction in the eastern region of Elfrieden is now nearing its completion. The construction of Veneti Nova is expected to make land and sea transports more efficient and would ...]

Incidentally, the news itself were gathered from all over Elfrieden, including Vannes, using the Kui —a homing-pigeon-like bird with homing instincts whose ability to sense the waves emanated by their owners to know where they are is used to make contact with individuals and places — that Aisha used a while back to receive messages from the God-Protected Forest. Their strong point was that they could deliver news even from remote valleys where the broadcast didn’t reach but on the other hand, unlike the Royal Broadcast that delivered news in real time, the information they delivered would be two to three days late.

For instance, if something occurred in Lagoon City at the easternmost point of the Kingdom, the news wouldn't go to Vannes directly, but they had to wait for a Kui that goes to various cities carrying news. The Kui would then carry the news to another city where it would be transferred over to yet another Kui to yet another city like a grade school information network 6. That was a measure to prevent the Kui from having to do long distance hauls and being attacked by wild animals along the way, thus severing the contact (emergency news, however, doesn't get delivered by Kui but would be transported by wyvern knights). For that reason, what happened one day wouldn't be delivered within that day.

[The next news is about the uproar happening early morning in Vannes ...]

After that, Chris went on reporting the events and incidents happening all across the Kingdom, then continued with useful information for daily life, like how to cook lily dumplings. It would've been useful to include a weather forecast along in the news programme, but the implementation was harder. This world had lore of weather, or people who were able to predict the weather by reading the movements of the clouds through long years of experience, but since there was no method of fast communication like I mentioned earlier, that information could not be relayed in real-time. There were things that concern lives like typhoons, so I wonder if I could do something about it ...

While I was thinking,

"I never thought the royal broadcast could be used this way ..."

I suddenly heard a voice. Looking ahead, I saw a young girl in adventurer clothes standing with her back towards us. Her long, straight, golden ponytailed hair swayed on her back. I thought that was Liscia for a moment, but her

ponytail was tied high, and Liscia was short-haired nowadays to begin with. The girl turned her face ninety degrees to the side and turned her gaze to us.

“So much that I would like to introduce this system to our country by all means possible. I’ll propose it when I get back home. Still, I wonder how they got an idea as advanced as this?”

Asked the beautiful-profiled girl. What’s this all of a sudden? I thought, but then Juna immediately got up and stood between me and the girl.

“Juna?”

“Please be careful”

Said Juna while she stood up to cover me. Her surprise was clear from her voice.

“... is she dangerous?”

“She’s quite skillful. It’s vexing that Aisha weren’t here. I wonder if I could hold her back in a draw ...”

“That bad ...”

The ponytailed girl saw the vigilant Juna and chuckled.

“There’s no need to worry, I don’t mean you any hostility. Miss Lorelei, Juna”

“How did you ...!”

“Of course, I made contact with you knowing who you are. We do have spies, too, you know”

Which means she knew who I am, too. So she came to make contact with me knowing that I was going to come here undercover. It was my fault for delaying the establishment of an intelligence department due to fear of personnel, but she said she didn't mean us any harm, so ...

“Are you from the Empire”

“Indeed I am. It is nice to meet you for the first time, Lord Soma”

The young girl put her fist on her chest as she said that and bowed her head.

“My name is Jeanne Euphoria, younger sister to the Grand Chaos Empress Maria Euphoria, put in charge of all matters military in my elder sister's stead”

## Chapter 02 – In Town C

(“How about our guards?”)

(“The other side has their guards too so they’re unable to move”)

(“Right, no way she’d come alone. ... I’ll leave Tomoe to you”)

Tomoe was still sleepy from being woken up so suddenly. I left her with Juna and faced Jeanne Euphoria. I have seen the reports of her. Supposedly the Grand Chaos Holy Maiden and Empress Maria Euphoria had a younger sister ruling over the military, and because Maria was unmarried, was the first in line of the Imperial succession. This must be her.

“And what business might the Empire’s number two have in our country?”

I deliberately pumped up my tone. We were not signatory to the Humanity Declaration, and as such had no need to recognize Maria as leader. Which means we are peers as rulers, Maria and I stand equal to one another. This girl was the younger sister of the Empress but formally, her position is that of a retainer, so I have the higher seat here. I didn’t particularly want to put on airs toward my retainers, but I have to make things clear when facing someone from a foreign country. Jeanne also replied as if my attitude was natural.

“No, I only sneaked in wanting to see how your highness Soma rules, but our man reported to me that your highness will be travelling to town incognito today, so I thought I should give my greetings”

In other words, she wasn’t intending to meet with me. Just that she was making contact because my vacation happen to coincide with her reconnaissance.

“But aren’t you quite bold, sneaking into Vannes while it’s under our occupation”

“There were things I can’t believe until I see them for myself anyhow. Rumors of your highness Soma had reached the Empire, but there were lots of ones with dubious truth. I wanted to see with my own eyes”

Rumors? I wonder what they talk about me there.

“Well, there’s [The benevolent ruler who restores the royal economy from the brink of bankruptcy], or [Solving the food crisis by introducing the cooking of never-before eaten foodstuffs], or [Mowing down the enemy hordes with peerless strengths in battle], and the like”

“... well, most of it’s an exaggeration”

Not even one of those were my accomplishments alone. The work restoring the economy I did together with the bureaucrats, and the gathering of foodstuffs was Poncho’s deed. As for the war, I only moved the army while the direct fighting was left entirely to other people. So what I did in the end was “leaving things to the people who can.”

“Ah, and there’s also a rumor that you were [a matchless lecher]”

“Whoa, hold on there!”

Who are you calling a lecher!?

“How did that rumor come to be!?”

“Well, they say that [despite being engaged to the beautiful daughter of the

previous King, you gathered beauties from all over the country to select your concubines]. Miss Juna over there, wasn't she the concubine you chose?"

"That is a misunderstanding!"

She was probably talking about the Elfrieden Bishoujo Grand Prix I did when gathering personell. It was just that when I said I didn't mind whatever talent they had, the fields of Warfare, Beauty, and Public Entertainment had a particularly large rush of applicants so I made them into tournament-style competitions. Project Lorelei hadn't even been conceived back in those days. Which reminds me, there were rumors that [The beauty competition is for selecting a mistress for the King], and so nobles would come and had their relatives enter. I guess that's how it would look from outside, huh.

"A c-concubine ... I did know there were rumors of that but ..." said Juna with a red face. S, seriously? Dammit, I can't take this lying down. Even though I've been working myself to death since the crown was handed over to me that I didn't even have time to adequately socialize with Liscia ... Or rather, this may be late but Liecia's and my relationship is flying on the rumor mills, huh.

"Humm ... if those rumors are untrue, then I guess I can't play that card," mumbled Jeanne with a worried look.

"Card?"

"Nothing, just that if you were really a lecher King, then I thought to have you capitulate by having Elder Sister say please 1"

"What are you making the Imperial Holy Maiden do!"

"But doesn't an appellation, like Holy Maiden, make your gentlemanly senses tingle?"

"Well that's ... understandable I suppose"

[Imperial Holy Maiden Maria] sounds like it won't be out of place as the title of a porn game. Though in that case, they'd swap the word for 'holy' with 'sex' 2, and if you ask me, I think there are a lot more of those bearing the name Jeanne rather than Maria but ... hey, never mind that!

"An appellation, huh ...? Does Lorelei make your senses tingle too?"

"Why are you also joining in, Juna!?"

"Ah, no ... didn't mean to ..."

"Ha ha ha, You're a much more interesting man than I expected, your highness"

That exchange was being laughed at by Jeanne.

"... I didn't mean to be funny though"

"Nonsense, it's good for the nation's stability if the King and his retainers get along, right? We couldn't have done that, you see"

"... The Empire isn't like this?"

"We have a ridiculously large territory, and the Empress' authority is great, too. Elder sister is revered as the Holy Maiden, almost worshipped, so family is all she has that she could have a relaxing chat with. To top it off, she tries to seriously play her part as the Empress, so she tries to treat everyone equally"

Jeanne shrugged her shoulders and looked toward the plaza.

"Our matter this time is related to that, too. We have to lend a hand to Amidonia who ignored the Humanity Declaration, even though we have nothing to gain from it"



“... As the idealistic Maria’s younger sister, you’re quite the realist, aren’t you”

“The elder sister is a dreamer, so the younger sister has to have her feet firmly on the ground”

Jeanne smiled as she said that. I was convinced, Jeanne’s way of thinking was closer to mine compared to Maria’s. A person who doesn’t hold lofty ideals, but a person who dealt with reality. I’m glad Jeanne’s not the Empress, I thought. She wouldn’t have stubbornly held on to territory, but split them up, keeping the good ones for herself. I know I’d do something like that.

“By the way,” said Jeanne pointing up at Chris’ image reflected in the sky.

“It’s amazing how you use the Royal Broadcast. Reducing the people’s anxiety by gathering and disseminating information. You don’t mind if we try it in our country, do you?”

“... be my guest”

It’s a simple thing to do if one wanted to do it. It’s useless to say no.

“Thank you very much. How do you come up with such an advanced idea?”

“Advanced, huh? It’s just that common in the world where I came from”

“The world you came from ... is it”

The smile disappeared from Jeanne’s face as she said that. She straightened herself up again and bowed. She bowed until her hips formed a right angle. She bowed so deep that I thought she would do a kowtow if they had the custom to. The sudden abasement threw me off”

“W, what’s this all of a sudden”

“We did something unpardonable to you. Please allow me to apologize here in place of my sister”

“Apology?”

Jeanne made a bitter smile as she raised her face.

“The hero summoning. The reason the Kingdom of Elfrieden summoned you to this world was because of our pressuring. My sister sincerely regrets having uprooted you from your home and called you to this world even though you have done us no wrong”

Jeanne lowered her head again. Aah ... that’s what it’s about.

“Raise your head, Jeanne Euphoria. What’s past is past”

“But ...”

“Well, I was angry at first, I worked really hard so I didn’t get handed over to the Empire”

But when I calmly think it over, there was no reason for the Empire to summon a hero. I thought they wanted me to join the anti-Demon war at the beginning, but the current war front was deadlocked but stable. Unlike the nearly bankrupt Kingdom, the Empire had no need of a hero. To begin with, even the Kingdom didn’t believe it could summon a hero, so the Empire wouldn’t be counting on it, either.

Also, the summoned hero was me. Summoning a hero with magic power comparable to a weapon of mass destruction, or capable of wielding a sword and armor like none other is one thing, but I only had powers that would be

slightly useful when managing things. Not even the Empire would need that. So the reason the Empire purposely sought such a hero would be ...

“It was the Empire being considerate in its own way, right?”

“.....”

“The kingdom was on the brink of bankruptcy that time because of the food problems and economic slump. They can’t exactly send out money for the war support. But since the Humanity Declaration includes the clause ‘for the countries far from the Demon King Territory to support the bulwarks that are the countries near the Territory’, the Empire had to collect, or else the supporting countries will be dissatisfied. That’s why you allowed the Kingdom to make a show of support by handing the hero over”

“Wait a minute, the Kingdom didn’t sign the Humanity Declaration, right? There’s no obligation for us to pay the support money, right?”

Juna asked me, but I shook my head.

“Truth is, we have reaped the benefits of the Declaration the Empire established. If we say we have no obligation just because we’re a non signatory party, we’ll end up suffering the signatory countries’ backlash. Countries like Amidonia would use it as a reason to build up an army and invade the Kingdom. They may even get the Empire to assume command”

Since the current war was fought against Amidonia alone, we were able to weather it through. Well, every nation would have their troubles, but if the Amidonians allied with Zem and Torgis and some of the eastern countries, and had the Imperial army add to their numbers, the Kingdom would be over in the blink of an eye.

“The Empire, who wanted all of humanity to stand united against the demons

would want to prevent that at all costs. That's why they even collected support money from non-signatory countries and allowed scapegoats to the countries that could not pay. To calm the signatory countries down, right? For the Kingdom, that scapegoat is the hero"

"... I really have no more words to offer you"

"Frankly speaking, you were going to ask for some valuable historic treasure if the hero summoning failed, weren't you?"

"You are correct. To top it off, you even contrived to raise the war support money for us. We're very thankful and at the same time ashamed of ourselves"

Jeanne looked heartached as she said that. I sighed.

"Like I said, what's past is past. I no longer have any grudge against you now. It's not like I had no attachments to the other world, but ... there are people here I've come to want to protect"

There's no one in the other world waiting for me to come home anymore, but there are people who do in this one. Whenever I came to the castle and said "I'm home," Liscia and Aisha would come greet me saying "welcome back". Just like family. For someone who knew the pain of loneliness, that is something I don't want to lose again.

"Well I found family to protect here. So you don't have to worry about it. If you're still worrying about it then how about recognizing Vannes as ours?"

After I said that, Jeanne silently shook her head.

"... unfortunately, I also have family I must protect"

"I see ... then there's no other choice but to negotiate, is there?"

“Yes. Please be gentle with me when the time comes”

Having finished, Jeanne sharply turned around and disappeared into the crowd. Juna said the presence of the opposing guards also disappeared. She really did come to say hi. She came and went all so suddenly.

“Jeanne Euphoria ... the realist younger sister supporting the idealist Holy Maiden”

If it's just the Crown Prince Julius of Amidonia, I'd be confident I can lead him by the nose, but with Jeanne as an agent, I don't think I could find a weak point. I fear that if I used a half-baked plan and she saw through it, she might instead use it against me. Goodness ... it's like I'm fighting myself here, she's a worse enemy than Ecksel in some ways.



Back in the castle, I took out the gifts for Liscia and Aisha. Liscia went and put on the blue leather choker encrusted with silver foil. She put her hand on the golden phoenix-shaped clasp and let out a satisfied smile.

“Thank you very much Soma. I'll treasure this”

Seeing Liscia smile with a slight sign of bashfulness, I was entranced. Yes, I'm glad she liked it. I'm glad I bought it for her. But on the other hand, Aisha ...

“AAAAAAAH Your highness! I'm very delighted you even brought me a souvenir! I was sad when you went and left me behind but now I feel like I can fly to the sky!”

“G, good for you ... Aisha”

“Yes, miss Juna! I’ll refine my womanliness with this lipstick! Then I can always stay by His Highness’ side ... huhuhuhuhu”

“D, do your best ...”

... that, was what she said. A little too happy, if you ask me. She exuded so much happy aura that even Juna (who added a hairpin by the way) who she was talking to reeled back. If Aisha weren’t a Dark Elf and was a Mystic Wolf like Tomoe, her tail would be wagging by now. Seeing Aisha, Liscia who still had her hand on her choker said in astonishment:

“Don’t you think a collar suits her better?”

“... no comment”

## Chapter 03 – The Negotiations A

There was a training ground inside Van's Castle. In that open air room, that was similar to a Japanese archery range, I was facing the fully equipped Aisha. The red armored Aisha bared her great sword[1] toward my direction, while opposing her were me and the five medium-sized Musashi Boy-kun dolls (It was in the middle between the small size, that was as big as a stuffed toy, and the large size, that was as big as a human).

「Then..... I will move, Your Majesty!」(Aisha)

「Come, Aisha!」(Souma)

The referee, Liscia at the corner of my field of view, raised her hand. At that moment, Aisha's great sword slashed down. In an instant, a visible shockwave flew towards me. I then moved Musashi Boy-kun (equipped with Shields in both of its hands) to the front and braced the shields. When the shockwave hit, it produced a loud banging noise, but Musashi Boy-kun A (Dual Shield) somehow managed to hold its ground.

「It's not over!」(Aisha)

However, without even a moment to feel relieved, Aisha pointed her great sword towards my direction and set the sword at her side, before thrusting it forward with all of her might. Even though, Musashi Boy-kun A piled its shields to guard against this attack, that battering ram-like attack penetrated both the piled up shields and Musashi Boy-kun.

(For real..... It pierced through those two bulky shields.....) (Souma)

I was taken aback by the unreasonable power, but currently, Aisha's feet were stopped. Using this chance, I sent Musashi Boy-kun B (Dual Sword) and Musashi Boy-kun C (Spear) from both of her flanks and attacked from both right and left at the same time. But Aisha stabbed the great sword, that had pierced through Musashi Boy-kun A to the ground, and then, as if using the great sword as a pivot, she did a cartwheel and evaded the attack by moving her body towards the air. Aisha ended up in a position similar to a handstand by using the great sword.

「There, 【Precision Shooting】!」(Souma)

The remaining Musashi Boy-kun D and E (Bow) aimed and shot at Aisha, whose feet had left the ground and could not move. Two arrows quickly flew towards Aisha.

「Naïve!」(Aisha)

On top of the stabbed down great sword, Aisha rotated her feet and did something like a capoeira handstand roundhouse kick (I don't know the proper name)[2] and then kicked down the two arrows. Then, she stepped down and immediately took out something from inside her pocket before flicking it towards me with her thumb.

「No.....way...」(Souma)

There was a 'pacch' sound from my forehead, so I was greatly taken aback. In the middle of my forehead, there was a ten yen coin sized piece of clay. If perhaps, this was a knife or a stone from a slingshot, then perhaps I would already be dead. Well, since it was only a "practice" match, I won't die, but as



expected, it's depressing to be defeated one-sidedly..... I then sat down on the spot.

「Ah, really..... I can't even put up a proper fight.」(Souma)

「T-that is.....」(Aisha)

「Aisha, I think it is important for the battle analysis, so just say it honestly.」  
(Liscia)

Liscia stopped Aisha, who was hurriedly approaching me, and, just like what Liscia had said, I was currently verifying my battle capability.

「Just like what Liscia said. Speak honestly.」(Souma)

「T-then..... How should I say this, I didn't feel any difficulty facing the 'Party' of dolls. But I think the previous 『Everyone carries swords in both hands and swarms』 tactic is more difficult to deal with.」(Aisha)

「Ah, the 『Pikmin Tactic』[3]..... But then, didn't you just blow them all away together?」(Souma)

「So in other words, it's below the standard.」(Liscia)

「Uuu.」(Aisha)

I hung my head when Liscia pointed this out. Since the Pikmin Tactic wasn't effective, then this time, I tried to use the combination tactic that was used by the adventurer party, that Musashi Boy-kun participate together with in the quest before, as a reference (if I have to name it, it will be called 『World Tree Labyrinth Tactic』[4], but in the end, this tactic failed

「Since an adventurer party will have a magician, after all. A shield that has been strengthened using magic would be difficult to pierce and, rather than arrows, elemental magic would also be difficult to deal with.」(Aisha)

Aisha said this sketchily. Also, rather than “impossible”, it’s “difficult”, so Aisha’s “above the norm” standard was really obvious.....

「Even if you mention a magician. I can’t use elemental magic or support magic.....」(Souma)

To say nothing of me, even if the 『Living Poltergeist』 dolls that I control could use 【Whirlwind Slash】 or 【Precision Shooting】, they couldn’t use magic to put elemental effects on their weapon or to shoot out flames or ice.

「I wonder if you can learn how to use them from something like a magic academy?」(Souma)

「It will be impossible. I have never heard a Dark Attribute user that can use magic from other attributes.」(Liscia)

Liscia immediately vetoed it. According to her, the four great attributes: Fire, Water, Earth, and Wind, created the phenomenon by manipulating mana in the air, while the Light attribute meddled with mana inside the body to increase the healing rate or to enhance the body. However, a Dark attribute didn’t have any ability to do this. In other words, no matter how much I learn or study, I won’t become a Magician or a Healer..... How should I say this? This is disappointing. I dropped my shoulders and Liscia began to speak with a surprised expression.

「What are you talking about? A Dark attribute is rare, you know? Even until now, I only have seen three person possessing it.」(Liscia)

「Three people? It’s me and Tomoe, right? ..... Who is the other one?」(Souma)

「It’s my Mother. But she never told me what her power is.」(Liscia)

Really.....The previous Queen, right? I met with her a bit when I was summoned. I'm certain the right to succeed the throne was originally the previous Queen's (so strictly speaking, the previous Queen Regnant)[5] and that the Queen was just entrusting the kingdom's governance to her husband, the previous King Albert? She was hidden behind the King's shadow, so I don't really remember her, but whenever I see her, she was always smiling, so I feel that she is a nice person.

「However, it seems that my power is not enough to protect myself.....」  
(Souma)

「Please be relieved, Your Majesty! I will always guard Your Majesty's life the entire time!」(Aisha)

Aisha hit her chest with a puff. In front of her reliability, I feel pathetic.

「A hero that is protected by a girl, as expected, is not cool.....」(Souma)

「What are you saying right now? Souma hasn't been hero-like since the very beginning, you know.」(Liscia)

Liscia slashed me down with a single stroke. I agree with her..... But could she not use such a coarse and indirect expression?[6] While I was thinking this,

「Isn't it Souma's way to entrust things that you can't do to people who can? Since you couldn't do it with your own power, then we will be the ones who will always protect you.」(Liscia)

Liscia said this while blushing. Aisha also followed her.

「Just like what the Princess said! Your Majesty is the one who has protected

the country where we live, so please let us protect Your Majesty's safety!」  
(Liscia)

「..... I see.」(Souma)

To have two beautiful girls saying this to me, although it is pathetic, I am also happy. I am a frail Hero(?), but I will protect the girls in my own way.....

No, I want to protect them. It's from the deepest part of my heart.

「Your Majesty.」(Juna)

When I turned my head at the sudden call, I saw Juna-san in her Marine uniform making a bow with her hand on her chest.

「Hakuya-dono is searching for you, he wanted to talk about the city planning.」  
(Juna)

「I understand. I will go to meet him right now.」(Souma)

I stood up and brushed away the dirt. I asked the soldiers to tidy the training ground, as I and the girls headed towards the government affairs office. I will do what I can do.



When we arrived at the government affairs office, Hakuya and Ludwin were already waiting inside. I sat at the desk, while Liscia, who had been in the secretary position since some time ago, and Juna-san, who was also in the secretary position due to the labor shortage, were sitting at both of my sides. Aisha was standing close to the door in her bodyguard stance. Recently, this has

become the standard formation for this room. After confirming that everyone was in position, Hakuya then showed a map of Van's city planning that he had prepared on the table.

「Please take a look at the city planning scheme.」(Hakuya)

Just like what he had suggested, I took a look at the map. There were four highways to each cardinal point from the Duke's Castle at the center towards the square outer walls, then, small roads branched out perpendicularly from the main road, which made the map look like a Go board[7]. It was as if I was seeing the map of Ancient Nara and Ancient Kyoto depicted in a history textbook.[8] The nobles' quarters would be integrated on the northeast section, while the workshops would be on the southwest section. Facilities, such as garrison military stations, are dispersed in an earth-staggeringly efficient manner. I let out a sigh while resting my chin on my hands.

「.....Hakuya.」(Souma)

「Yes, Your Majesty.」(Hakuya)

「This is overkill.」(Souma)

After all, this was a city planning that was really taking efficiency into serious consideration. “Ane-san-rokkaku-tako-nishiki” .....[9] Why are you turning the streets into a mysterious unrecitable spell? In the first place, for such a large scale reconstruction, won't it be quicker if we just burned down the entire city? Do I need to become a Nero emperor?[10]

「I am sorry. After looking at that disordered city planning, I had this sudden impetus to make it more efficient.....」(Hakuya)

Perhaps Hakuya understood this, so he made a wry smile as he pointed at the main street.

「However, for the fire countermeasures, it is important to establish a boundary. So establishing these main streets is necessary.」

「That's seems to be so. However, I want to reflect the will of the people who live on the other parts. I want them to think about what kind of city they want to be and what they think about the other people living alongside with them. If we just decided anything and everything here, then it could incite a rebellion.」  
(Souma)

「Just in case, I have called several architects who lived in this city, but..... Asking the opinion of the people in this city? But with the current atmosphere, the result would be some avant-garde art.....」(Hakuya)

「An artistic city, huh? ..... That sounds interesting if that's really the case.」  
(Souma)

It might be a good idea to also establish art galleries and museums..... What will it be? Since there is a open air market just like Ameyoko[11], I feel that Van would gradually turn into Ueno. If that's the case, then let's also build a Zoo, too[12]. If we borrow Tomoe-chan's power, then it will easy to make it a reality, since the Pongos (mountain apes) could quickly build it. However, Hakuya shook his head.

「Van will become the front line city against Amidonia. At this point of time, it is impossible to create such pleasant city.」(Hakuya)

「.....Ah, that's true.」(Souma)

After all, you can't hope much for the defensive capabilities of an Art City. I want to quickly turn it into a city that you can change as you wish. I then looked at Ludwin's direction.

「What's the current state of the work for establishing a transportation network?」(Souma)

「Yes, Your Majesty. Presently, the Royal Army's King's Guards and the Army had given their entire effort and have connected Van to the highway that leads to the Kingdom's territory. In addition, we have completed connecting the road to the villages surrounding Van that are under our current possession. We have also constructed eight bridges over the rivers, but.....」(Ludwin)

「But?」(Souma)

I asked Ludwin, who seemed to be hesitating and then, while showing an uncomprehending expression, he asked.

「Currently, I don't understand what the meaning of establishing the transportation network is. Of course, I understand that it is necessary to establish roads for the supply line. However, currently the Empire doesn't recognize Van's ownership, so if we construct roads and bridges, won't it just be a worthless endeavor when it gets handed back over?」(Ludwin)

「He's right..... The Empire, of course, would demand Van's return. It will also be annoying if Julius uses the bridges that we constructed.」(Liscia)

Liscia also made a pensive expression. However,

「Perhaps that won't happen.」(Hakuya)

「Yes. Not happening.」(Juna)

Hakuya and Juna-san denied it together.

「With all due respect, the Ducal Prince Julius is not someone who has that kind of personality.」(Hakuya)

「I heard that he has high pride, so he wouldn't do something like using a bridge that had been constructed by his enemies.」(Juna)

「Hummm..... If it's me, even if it's Amidonia's, as long as it can be used, I will use it.」(Souma)

For example, that husky voiced female general. Ever since that day, Margarita Wanda had done her best as the singing contest's host. In this country, where a woman is looked down upon by men, a woman who can speak frankly to the male participants is precious. She is also powerful, so the half-hearted men wouldn't oppose her. Well, leaving that aside.

「If he had such a high pride, then shall we try to do something to harass him?」(Souma)

「Harass him?」(Liscia)

「We shall bestow names to the bridges. There are eight, right? Then Souma Bridge, Liscia Bridge, Albert Bridge, Hakuya Bridge, Ludwin Bridge, Poncho-Ishidzuka Bridge, Aisha Bridge and Juna Bridge. Engrave each of these names on the respective bridges' guardrails. Even if they change hands, we could still emphasize the Elfrieden Kingdom's contribution. In this case, wouldn't Julius want to destroy them instead?」(Souma)

「Souma..... You really take to such dirty measures so easily...」(Liscia)

Liscia answered in half admiring half amazed tone, but since there were no objections, this plan would be accepted. Incidentally, I requested that the bridge were only sufficiently strong, as it will be alright if the bridges are destroyed. I also confirmed that they didn't ornament the bridges. After seeing Hakuya and Ludwin going off to carry out the plan that we had decided on just now, Liscia sighed.



「As expected, it is hard since the Empire maintains their demand for Van's return?」(Liscia)

「Yeah.....They have no intentions to change their basic policy, but if that Sister Princess[13] is our enemy, it will be impossible to push things our way. Even if it ended successfully for us, the Empire would lose its face. If that's the result, it will incur the Empire's hostility, and it will be a diplomatic failure.」(Souma)

「I heard that Souma met with Jeanne Euphoria. Is it true? About how the Hero Summoning was their consideration for our country?」(Liscia)

Did she heard that from Juna-san? I only nodded in response.

「Yeah.」(Souma)

「Since when did Souma realize this?」(Liscia)

「Ever since I heard that the Empire is led by someone referred to as the 『Holy Maiden』, I have had a vague hint. I believed that a person who was touted as a figurehead called the 『Holy Maiden』 wouldn't do such a relatively unreasonable action.」(Souma)

「Isn't that position was just their public face?」(Liscia)

「It is because it is their public face, that it is convenient to be touted.」(Souma)

For the Empire that has a humongous territory and is composed of many races and tribes, a figurehead called the 『Holy Maiden』 is convenient to act as the unifying force. It was all the more important, since the Empire wanted to create a system to manage an united Humanity front to counter the Demon Lord Army. Then, so that they wouldn't lose this convenience, Maria Euphoria would be someone who will act just how a Holy Maiden would do.

「Because of this, you could interpret the Empire's request in a favorable light,

or something like that.」(Souma)

Well, until my discussion with Jeanne, I didn't have any positive proof of this. But I had finally confirmed it in the discussion with Jeanne. Although, the Grand Chaos Empire appears to be something like an『Evil Empire』 in a story, it is not a haughty superpower nation. They are only “a normal strong nation” that endeavors to frantically preserve their country.

「For this reason.....we can't be completely careless in this.」(Souma)

「You're right.」(Liscia)

I exchanged looks with Liscia and the other two, and then I made a sigh.



On the next day, that Sister Princess, Jeanne Euphoria, accompanied by the claimant, the new Amidonian Duke, Julius, appeared in Van as the envoy for the territory return negotiations.

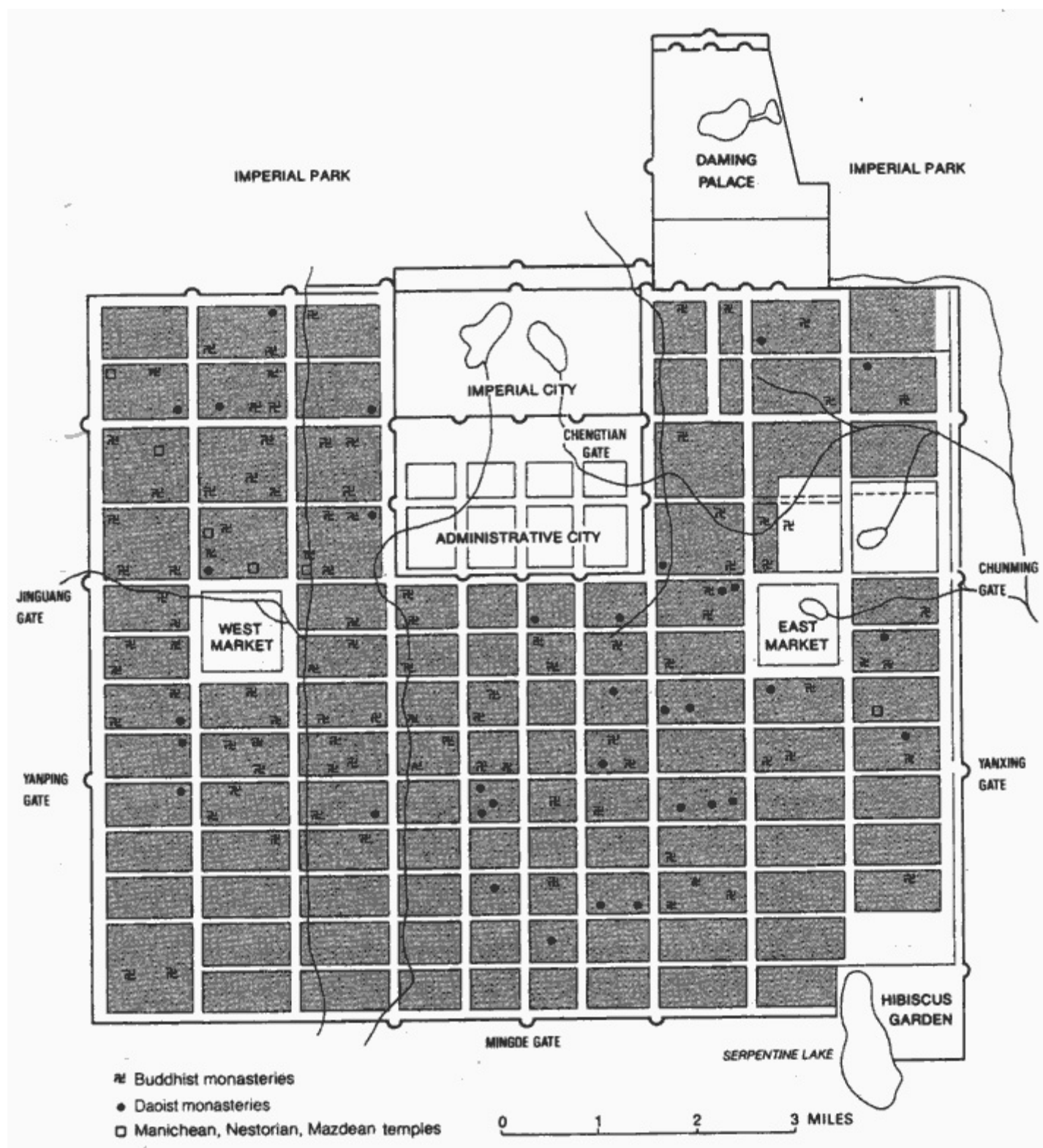
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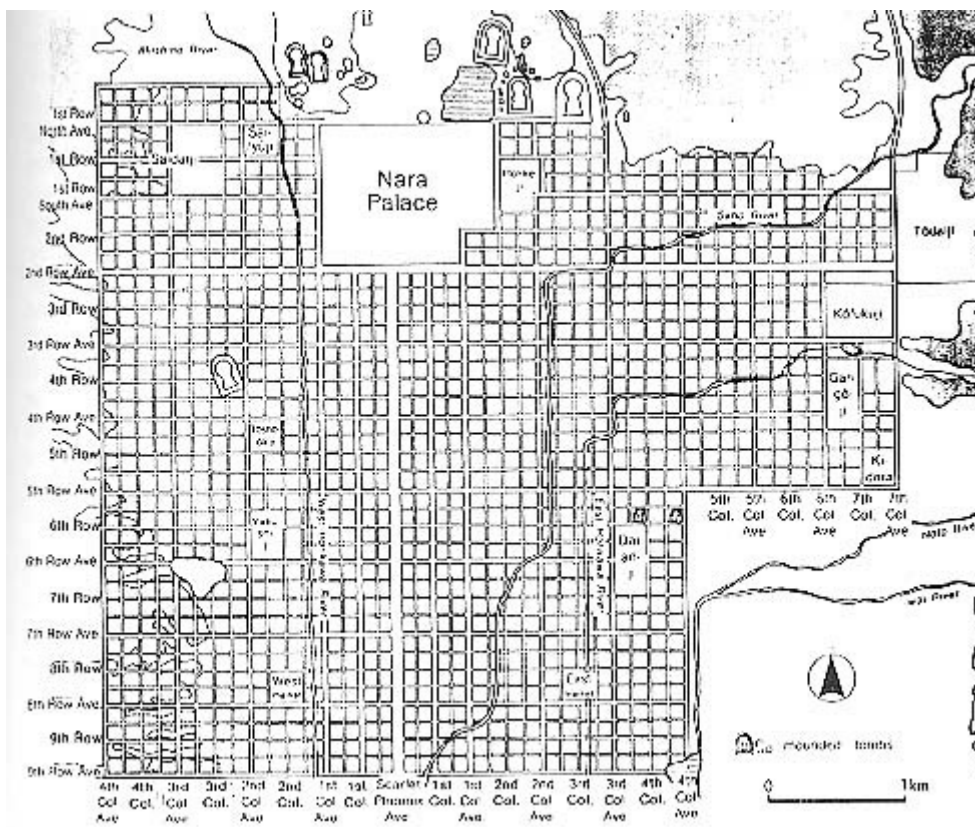
- [1] Great sword大剣 : Two-handed large size sword like a Zweihander. Imagine the Great Sword from the Monster Hunter series.
- [2] Perhaps “Mea lua” or “Bananeira”
- [3] Basically, a Japanese version of Zerg Rush. Pikmin is an RTS game for WiiU
- [4] Originally: Sekaijuu no Meikyuu(世界樹の迷宮). The Japanese name for Etrian Odyssey, a dungeon RPG crawling game for Nintendo DS
- [5] The Japanese language differentiates the Queen Consort (the wife of a

reigning King) and Queen Regnant (Queen who reigns). In this sentence Souma refers to the Queen as 王妃 (Queen as in Queen Consort) before correcting it to 女王 (Queen as in Queen Regnant).

[6] Souma was saying “using starch paper as an oblaat covering”. Oblaat is a thin transparent edible starch that cover some candies in Japan and some parts of Asia.

[8] Nara and Kyoto, both former Japanese capital cities, had the layout mimicking China’s capital city layout. For example take a look at the map of Chang An (Xi’an) and Nara:





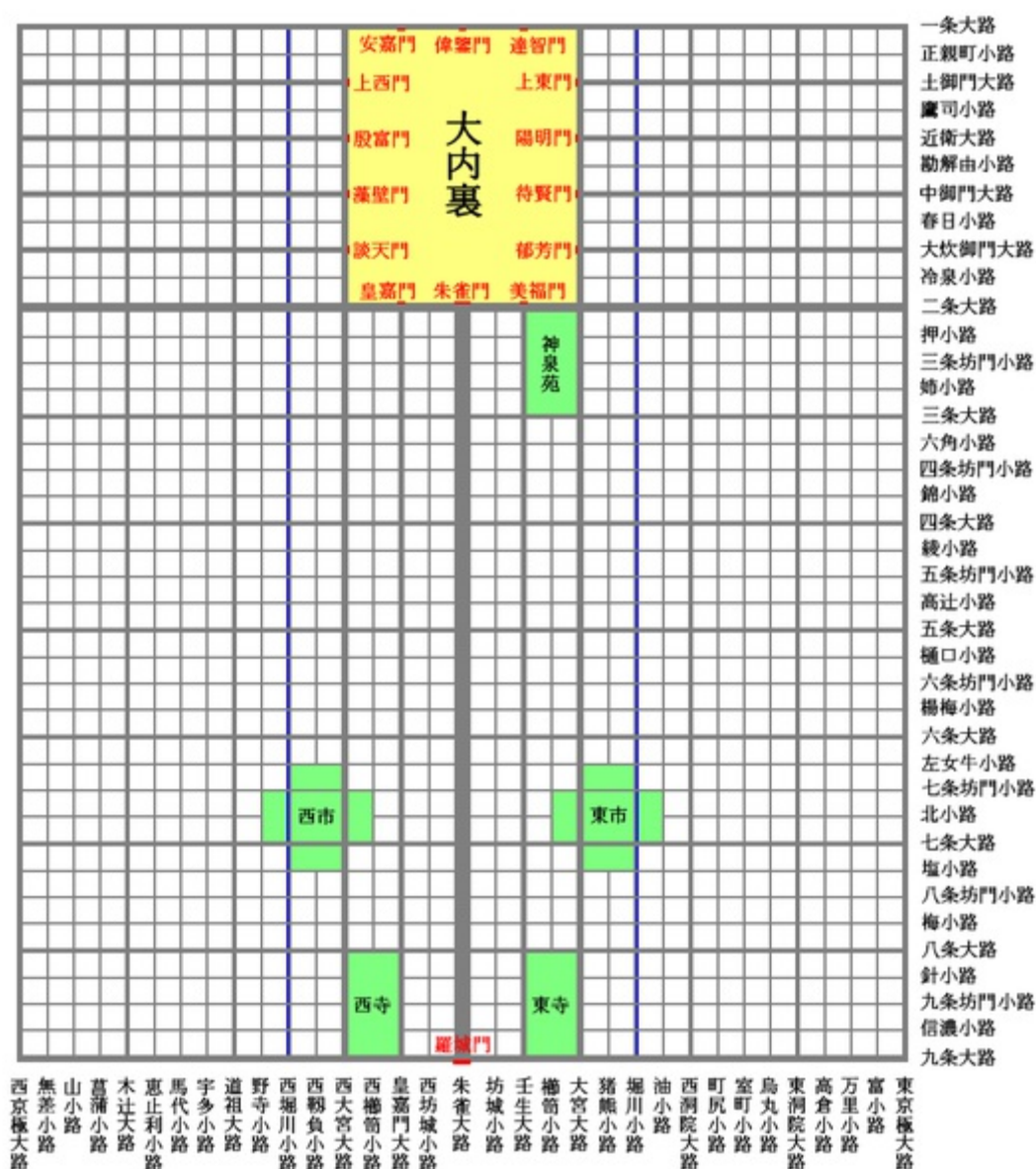
(the map for Kyoto is on the footnote 9)

Which itself mimicked the city grid for Chengzhou, the legendary capital of Zhou. Which Hakuya seems mimicked.

Please read this article for more information: Ancient Chinese urban planning

[9] Souma is mentioning あねさんろつかくたこにしき (姉三六角蛸錦) or ane san rokkaku tako nishiki section from “Kyoto Road Song” or “Kyou no toori no uta” also known as “Marutake-ebisu”. (see <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fPhZyUj-EkU>). If you watched Detective Conan Movie 7 - Crossroad in the Ancient Capital, you will immediately recognize this song.

The lyric itself is meaningless: “The sister with three six horns octopus dress”. But it helps the children as the Mnemonic to remember the road layout in central old Kyoto (see the following map)



The Anesan Rokkaku Tako Nishiki refer to ANEkouji (姉小路) Street, SANjou (三条) Street, ROKKAKU (六角) Street, TAKOyakushi (蛸薬師) Street, and NISHIKIkouji (錦小路) Street. (The street number 14 to 18 from the top of the map).

[10] For those who are not good in Imperial Roman History: in 18-24 July 64 CE, Rome had a great fire that devastated 10 of 14 districts of Rome, 3 were completely burned to the ground. Most people believe that it was Emperor Nero who ordered the fire to be set, so that after the neighborhoods had been cleared, he could built his new palace Domus Aurea. After the Great Fire, Nero rebuilt Rome with a new urban planning layout. Including wide roads and open spaces to stop fire (what Hakuya also tried to do). For more reading: Read The Annals by Tacitus: [HERE](#)

[11] Ameya-Yokochō (アメヤ横丁 Ameya alley?) is an open-air market in the

Taito Ward of Tokyo, Japan, located next to Ueno Station.

[12] Ueno is a Tokyo district that is famous with its multitude of art galleries and museums and considered as home to some of Tokyo's finest cultural sites. Ueno also the home for Ueno Zoo. As mentioned, Ameya-yoko is located next to Ueno.

[13] Portmanteau of 妹 (Imouto) and 姫 (Hime) (princess) = so Sister Princess

## Chapter 03 – The Negotiations B

「Whoa, what a superb view.」(Souma)

Looking down from the ramparts of Van, I could see the formation of fifty thousand soldiers from the Elfrieden Army around Amidonia, and on the opposite side, I could see the formation of about fifty thousand soldiers from the Grand Chaos Empire Army. By the Empire's side was the five thousand men strong Amidonian Army, so the total was close to about sixty thousand men. The number of soldiers was more numerous than the previous battle and were all gathered right beneath my eyes.

「If you look around, the gathering of an incoming large enemy army, how fun♪」[1](Souma)

「What's with that song?」(Liscia)

「It's a modified form of a song from a war period in my country.....something like that.」(Souma)

The melody is 『close and open』. My granny once said, 「『close and open』was originally a foreign folk song. When it first arrived in Japan the lyric is 『If you look around, the green willow mixed together with the sakura flower』. The song I sang just now was a modified version of the 『If you look around』 song. Liscia, who stood beside me, replied in astonishment.

「What was the occasion for that song? If that army really came to attack, what would happen?」(Liscia)

「First, without a doubt, we will lose. Right, Hakuya?」(Souma)

Hakuya who also stood beside me nodded at my question.

「Just as you said, Your Majesty. Regarding the in the number of soldiers, generals, equipment, experience and moral..... Our country loses to the Empire in every field. If this becomes a battle, then our Army has no chance to prevail.」  
(Hakuya)

「.....Of course, right.」(Souma)

Battles are driven by 『Heaven, Earth, Man』[2], that is 『Heavenly opportunities (timing of attack), Earthly advantage (geographical advantage), and the Harmony of Man』. The Empire, leader of the anti-Demon Lord Army, has the timing of attack and the Amidonian Army has the geographical advantage. However, if I was asked if the Kingdom has the People's Harmony to oppose the Empire, then I can only answer: no. I could only dispatch the soldiers from the Army and the Air Force, so that they could be exempted from their treasonous rebellion. It was not that bad when the enemy was just Amidonia by itself, but when the enemy is the superior in all fields, aka the Imperial Army, then of course we couldn't expect any fighting spirit from our men.

「If we could at least win in equipments.....」(Souma)

Even when looking from this place, I could see the Rhinoceros corps that are attached with the Field Cannons. I had heard that Rhinoceroses were used in castle sieges, but it seems that the Empire has used them even further as mobile artillery. Actually, I also had this kind of idea, but for a Rhinoceros to be able to be equipped with cannons, it was necessary to “train”[3] them, so they wouldn't be spooked by the sound of gunpowder explosions. Since the Rhinoceroses on our side were gathered by Tomoe-chan's “please”, I had shelved the prospect of “training” them.



It was vexing to see that the Empire had already implemented the corps that I had in mind. But well, if any military layman thought about it for a bit, then they would hit upon the same idea, too. As long as there is a demand, then most of these ideas will be implemented. Of course there doesn't need to be a battle, just making a stance that it could be used in battle could become a negotiation card. On the contrary, it could be said that the Army spread before my eyes is the card prepared by the Empire. Even though I knew about this, this situation is quite a conundrum.

「"My Liege (陛下/heika), there is an unfamiliar "legion" (兵科/heika).」[4]  
(Aisha)

At a place not far from me, Aisha, who was looking at the enemy army, spoke out.

「What's with that lousy pun?」(Souma)

「N-no, you're wrong, Your Majesty! I meant the enemy's corps! I can see that there is a group of soldiers wearing completely black full plated armor!」(Aisha)

「Completely black? ..... I can't see any human-sized troops too well from this distance.」(Souma)

「Dark elves have good eyes. That group carries very long weapons.」(Aisha)

「I think that perhaps they are the 『Magic Armored Corps』.」(Hakuya)

Hakuya appended his words on Aisha's. it is a new phrase for me.

「Magic Armored Corps?」(Souma)

「Perhaps it can be explained as a heavily-armored pike infantry specializing in anti-magic combat. That black helmet and armor constantly generates a barrier

that could withstand any kind of magic. There is a saying that the Empire's territory extends just as far as these soldier files could march, so they are the Empire's treasured army that they are the most proud of.」(Hakuya)

Oh, really..... Certainly pike infantry is a type of soldier carrying long spears for anti-cavalry combat. Although, I only know about this from games, they would make a dense phalanx formation to oppose the charging cavalry. So they are a corps that sticks out their spear to counter an attack. Certainly, I believe that depending on the situation, they could be a powerful corps..... But is it to the extent where they could be called a treasured army? I asked Hakuya about this.

「Your Majesty, do you remember the reason why gunpowder infantry never appeared both in this Continent and outside this Continent?」(Hakuya)

He asked me back.

「Because magic's attack power is higher and its firing range is longer, so gunpowder weapons are unnecessary, right? That's why large mass projectile cannons are used only in naval battles or when attacking wall reinforced with magic.」(Souma)

「That's correct. In addition, the creatures living on this Continent have hard skins, so the average gunpowder infantry wouldn't be able to damage them.」(Hakuya)

In other words, since they couldn't even use it as hunting weapons, there were no reasons to develop guns. But then, they should have developed rifling or armor-piercing bullet, right? Even a musket that could only fire a literally round pellet should have been widespread (the Japanese domestic arquebus is an early form of musket). If at one point, we could produce such a rifle, then it should have increased the country's power. But even if I knew about the

musket's history, as expected, I didn't know about its construction. Hakuya continued his explanation.

「Furthermore, depending on its suitability, the armor could also be enchanted with a damage reduction effect. Conversely, to break through this, it is normal for a weapon to also be enchanted with a damage increase effect.」  
(Hakuya)

「Ah, a vicious circle.....」 [5](Souma)

「Yes. There also the fact that the enchantment arts for armors and weapons are more powerful on objects with a greater mass. In other words, in this world, the arrow are stronger than a bullet, but the arrow is weaker than the lance.」[6]  
(Hakuya)

So does that mean, even if we develop a rifle, the small bullet wouldn't have much power? The day for the implementation of gun corps becomes increasingly distant.....

「Even in this world, using magic or a wyvern knight bombardment wouldn't be effective against them and a cavalry charge would simply be countered. Also it is not possible to aim the cannons to shoot at them (the shells are not explosive) [7], so in the end, that mass of black helmets and armors would still slowly be approaching. For the enemy's side, it will be.....」(Hakuya)

「Quite a horror. They would only see them as Hell's Army.」(Souma)

If they are fighting on the flat plains, they will be invincible. So perhaps battling them on a hilly region or wetlands that have bad footholds, luring them towards the traps, or surrounding them and creating chaos in their formation..... was something that I had thought, but these plans were only applicable in a defensive battle. It will be hard for the invader to battle on the place that they choose. So the phrase 『Territory as far as the Magic Armored Corps have

marched』 was really suitable.

「Furthermore, the Imperial Army also has strong units besides the Magic Armored Corps.」(Liscia)

Liscia told me as she looked at the enemy lines.

「Not to mention the Wyvern Knights, they also have Griffon Knights that are said to be as strong as the Dragon Knights. Magician Corps that overwhelm our own in terms of both number and quality, battle-specialized Rhinoceros Corps..... If we battle with the Empire, then we will need to take on all of them.」  
(Liscia)

Ah..... She's right. The enemy's army didn't only have the Magic Armored Corps. So my thinking about battling them in a place that I chose was foolish.

「.....As expected, we couldn't win against the Empire.」(Souma)

「Souma.....」(Liscia)

「Your Majesty.....」(Aisha)

Because Liscia and Aisha made worried faces, I smiled a bit.

「Not yet, for now.」(Souma)

「「!?」」(Liscia)(Aisha)

「Now then, shall we greet Jeanne and Julius?」(Souma)

When I made this order, the other three answered vigorously.

「「「Yes, Your Majesty!」」」(Liscia)(Aisha)(Hakuya)



Van's Castle's Audience Room.

In an audience room that had both paint and decor more glamorous than the one in Parnam Castle, I sat on the throne. Standing on the carpet several steps below me were the younger sister of the Grand Chaos Empire's Empress, Jeanne Euphoria, and the eldest son of the late Amidonian Duke Gaius VIII, Julius. Julius, who I met now for the first time, was a handsome man in his twenties and had a cold feeling similar to Hakuya's, but his eyes, that seemed to see others as beneath him, gave me an unpleasant feeling. He is an ikemen who I couldn't be liked, or for short, an "eerikemen" type of feeling.[8]

Our lineup for facing them had as only Liscia and Hakuya at both of my sides, and Aisha, who served as the bodyguard, behind me. Seeing this, Jeanne tilted her head.

「How unexpected. I would have imagined that the negotiations would be watched by a lot of soldiers.」(Jeanne)

「Soldiers shouldn't be needed for the audience with only the both of you, right? It will be discourteous.」(Souma)

「Indeed. An admirable insight.」(Jeanne)

Said Jeanne in admiration, but inside my mind, I stuck out my tongue. I simply believe that if a ruler in the Romance of the Three Kingdoms had done what Jeanne had pointed out, then there will be a shameful scene where the envoy says, 『You only have an audience of two people, but is it the Kingdom's etiquette

to be surrounded by soldiers?』 or 『Do you not feel secure if there are no soldiers protecting you?』..... So I did this to shut her up.

「Well..... As long as there is that lady behind you, you will feel safe, right?」  
(Jeanne)

Jeanne's sharp eyes looked at Aisha. Did military people give off an aura or something? She could accurately see through Aisha's capabilities. Aisha made a bow while staying in silent.

「An excellent soldier you have there. I wanted to have one bout with her, but I think it will be hard for me to win. As expected from King Souma, you have excellent retainers.」(Jeanne)

What a compliment. I couldn't see how much truth was in it. She shouldn't be someone who would back down just by seeing Aisha's vigilant appearance, right?

「So are you, you are bold not to take any companions even though you are going to face the king of a country. Aren't you worried about being assassinated?」(Souma)

「I am coming to this place as an envoy of peace. Why should I worry about being killed?」(Jeanne)

Jeanne, who said this while smiling, was quite an actress. She didn't "bring any companions", but wouldn't the Imperial spy corps who had already infiltrated this castle were protecting her? Perhaps right now, they were rattling blades with Juna-san's Marine Corps who were guarding this conference. Next, I shifted my attention to Julius.

「It is a pleasure to have finally met with you. I am Souma Kazuya.」(Souma)

「.....Amidonian Duke Julius.」(Julius)

Julius called himself as the Duke while not concealing the hostility in his eyes. He couldn't perform the coronation ceremony since we had occupied Van, so he shouldn't be able to introduce himself as th Duke, but I couldn't point this out since I was also in the same situation as him.[9]

「Then, what is the purpose of your current visit?」(Souma)

「.....What a farce. Return Van promptly!」(Julius)

「Julius-dono.....」(Jeanne)

Jeanne made a sour face as if she had swollen a bug, but Julius ignored her and kept on talking.

「Our Amidonia Dukedom is a participant in the 『Humanity Declaration』. There is a provision where 『Border changes due to military action would not be recognized』! Elfrieden's action of dispossessing Van using military action is in violation of this provision, so I demand a prompt return of Van!」(Julius)

「Say what you like, but...」(Souma)

I rest my hand on the throne and placed my chin on it before continuing.[10]

「The one who invaded Elfrieden Kingdom not long ago was your side, right? Your side is the one who schemed first to change the border with military power, but when you lost the war, you complained about the provision violation. Isn't that rather unreasonable?」(Souma)

「.....The invasion to Elfrieden Kingdom was Father's..... Gaius' own arbitrary action.」(Julius)

「But you had also gone with the same campaign, then that's why you have the same crime. To begin with, before doing negotiations about territory returns, you ought to apologize for invading our country first, right?」(Souma)

「Kugh.....」(Julius)

「Julius-dono, what King Souma said is true. Since our current position is asking for a territory return, we must begin to show our goodwill by apologizing first.」(Jeanne)

Julius was completely vexed in his heart, but since this was something that his last ray of hope, Jeanne, had said, then although he hated it... no, real~ly hated it, he lowered his head.

「.....Even though it was the previous Duke Gaius' own actions to invade your country, it is my fault for not being able to stop him. I ask for forgiveness in this.」(Julius)

「I wonder why I am not hearing any apologetic words.....」(Souma)

「However, the current situation is that our country has been invaded by your country. Since we are a participant in the Humanity Declaration, we have the right to appeal towards the Empire, to request the return of this territory.」(Julius)

「Such a proud way of "I'll leave it to others". Julius might have said this, but what is the Empire's opinion about this?」(Souma)

Seeing I had brought her into this matter, Jeanne shrugged her shoulders.

「The Empire doesn't want to support Amidonia since they reaped what they had sowed. However, since they are a participant nation of the Humanity



Declaration, we couldn't reject their request.」(Jeanne)

「In other words, the Empire wishes for us to return the territories we captured during the war, beginning with Van?」(Souma)

「That's correct.」(Jeanne)

Well, I had guessed that the Empire would take such a position. I was getting irritated at Julius, who stood beside her while making a face as if saying: this is justified. But this progressed just like assumed. Therefore, I answered just like in the assumptions.

「I refuse.」(Souma)

+++++

[1] It's based on the older version of the children むすんでひらいて (close and open [palms]) tune (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oypsXiOM3S0>) which came from Le devin du village, a French opera by Jean-Jacque Rousseau (also known as Rousseau's Dream) . The tune is then used by a 1773 rendition of the "Lord, dismiss us with Thy blessing" Hymn (the Greenville hymn version <http://www.hymnary.org/media/fetch/184008>), which was then used by the US 19th century Folk Song : Go tell Aunt Rhody (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v4vxDJKjoBI> | you know, the one used by Resident Evil 7). Which was then borrowed by the Japanese Ministry of Education as a Hymn for the Book of Hymns for the Elementary School Children in 1881 as 見渡せば (When I take a look around) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uKw6-6dZh0A>), and as the Militarism took over the nation in 1895, the song lyric was changed into 戦闘歌 (the War song) (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YmOxqtGZMP8>): This is the version that was sung by Souma. After WW2 was over, the song lyric was changed once more into the current form.

[2] This is from the Three War Principles from Mencius: “天時不如地利, 地利不如人和” in Gong Sun Chou II (公孫丑下). Souma is using the Japanese shortform: “天の時、地の利、人の和”. The full quote from Mencius:

“Opportunities of time vouchsafed by Heaven are not equal to the advantages of the situation afforded by the Earth, and the advantages of the situation afforded by the Earth are not equal to the union arising from the accord of Men.”

[3] The training here means: Breaking an animal in with force so they would obey.

[4] *untranslatable pun forgive my poor native English capabilities* (E/N: Man, I can't think of a single way to translate that pun either. (=.=)) Changed into the current form thanks to ReaderBot from NUF. Pun is really something that hard to translate...

[5] vicious cycle refer to complex chains of events which reinforce themselves through a feedback loop. In this case the existence of defence enchantments magic cause the development of offensive enchantments magic, which triggered the development of even better defence enchantments magic that trigger even better offensive enchantments magic , which trigger an even greater better defence enchantments magic, which repeating ad infinitum.

[6] That's why the Magic Armored Corps weary a very bulky full plated armor and carry a pike: a long and heavy weapon. Greater mass = greater protection and offence.

[7] Eh? Wouldn't a cannon roundshot is an excellent anti-infantry weapon???

[8] This is a pun: イケメン (Ikemen = hunk) and 好かない (Sukinai = unlikeable, detestable). Souma took Ike from Ikemen and combine it into “いけ好かない” (ikesukinai). I don't know how to make a suitable pun for this in English, so I just translate it as it is. (E/N: I used “eerie” + “ikemen”, does that work?) Better than nothing I guess...

[9] Remember that even now, Souma hadn't formally been crowned yet. The right to succeed the throne is actually are in Liscia, so unless Souma marry her, he would only, in his own words, an Acting King (Acting in the meaning of “temporarily doing the duties of another person”) not a proper King.

## Chapter 03 – The Negotiations C

「Wh-.....」(Julius)

Perhaps because my firm rejection was something unexpected, for a moment Julius was at a loss for words. However, he immediately spoke out with naked anger plastered on his face

「Bastard[1], are you insane?! Do you think you can escape unscathed to defy the Humanity Declaration!」(Julius)

「That is not something that someone like you can say. You invaded Efrieden's territory, and then, when you got invaded in exchange, you started yelling “no border changes with military power”. Because of that, your reasoning doesn't make any sense.」(Souma)

「That is..... Everything was just the previous Duke Gaius' arbitrary act-.....」(Julius)

「You also know that those words are just excuses, right?」(Souma)

When I threw the question back at him, Julius' words were tightly clogged up.

「.....Whatever you say, it doesn't change the fact that you are occupying our citizens. I, as this country ruler, ought to liberate my people.」(Julius)

So he objected. But, liberating from an occupation, yeah.....

「Is that something that Van's Citizens desire?」(Souma)

「What?」(Julius)

「Julius-dono, when you were travelling to this place, didn't you see how Van's streets and buildings looks like?」(Souma)

Julius stared in amazement at my question, but he immediately replied while glowering at me.

「Van is a city where I was born. I am more familiar with it than someone like you.」(Julius)

「Is that so..... Then, what “color” does that Van have right now in your sight?」(Souma)

「Color? If it's buildings with distasteful color on their walls or roofs, then I saw several of them, what of it.....」(Julius)

「..... Well I wouldn't find fault in someone's sense of art, but Julius-dono, if they are under an occupation, would the citizens who were struggling under tyrannical rule paint their walls and roofs so colorfully like that?」(Souma)

Without any antagonism, I explained in a very kind and detailed manner for Julius.

「If the despot imposes his power on the citizens, then the citizens wouldn't do something that would attract the eyes of the despot, right? Since the citizens wouldn't know what kind of calamity would fall upon them if they did any flashy acts that caught up the despot's eyes. Therefore, the citizens under a tyrannical rule wouldn't speak of their discontent, wouldn't let their attitudes show their emotions, and would stow away their true opinions into the deepest corners of their hearts. Because of this, something like colorfully painting their walls and roofs would be something that they absolutely wouldn't do. Right?」(Souma)

At this point, I momentarily stopped my words, as I stared directly at Julius' eyes and continued my explanation.

「However, what color did that Van have when you were governing this city?」  
(Souma)

「! That is.....」(Julius)

Julius hesitated to say. Well, of course. When I first entered Van, the color that I sensed was “Grey Townscape.” The buildings that stood in the labyrinth-like unmaintained districts were only houses with ash grey walls and brown earth roofs without any fragment of individuality. The uniformity of the color tone, even without any standardization, might be the fault of the lack of freedom given to the citizens of this city.

「The Van that I govern right now and the Van that you had ruled before, as expected, which one that seems to be an “occupied” city?」(Souma)

「Bastard, are you accusing us of being tyrannical despots!」(Julius)

「It's a fact, right? Most of your national budget is poured into military expenses, right? ..... Ah, also for the furnishing of this castle, right? Even though the tax that the people paid should essentially be used for the Citizen's welfare, it wasn't. Not for maintaining the city, not for maintaining the roads, not for promoting industry, but all those heavy taxation fees went to the military. Isn't that stupid?」(Souma)

「Shut your mouth up!」(Julius)

「Cease it, Julius-dono!」(Jeanne)

Jeanne stopped Julius who seemed to want to approach me. To be stopped no more than a half-step, he gritted his teeth with frustration. Although they weren't permitted to carry any weapons into the audience, if Jeanne hadn't stopped him, perhaps he would cast a magic spell at me. If that happens, then

we could have attacked Julius under the justification of self-defense, but..... It is not the time for that.

「Aisha, you should also release your hand from the hilt.」(Souma)

「.....Yes.」(Aisha)

I reminded Aisha, who stood diagonally behind me while emitting a strong bloodthirst. She replied in the dejected tone of a child that has just been scolded. Don't worry Aisha, I didn't pay any mind to it. Even if the opponent Julius was acting all high and mighty, I felt safe since Aisha is protecting me. Then, Jeanne sighed while offering her honest opinion.

「King Souma..... I want you to stop inciting Julius-dono.」(Jeanne)

「I am only telling the truth. An economy is about managing the land and providing relief to its citizens[2]..... despite that that was the ideal image of a ruler, his governance that was wasting all the heavy tax for military expenses was clearly tyrannical despotism.」(Souma)

「Whose fault was this! You bastards had robbed from us our ancestral lands!」  
(Julius)

「So, this again.....」(Souma)

Julius repeated his constant insistence, so I sighed.

「Although Amidonia's Royal Family had been yelling revenge against Elfrieden's Royal Family at every opportunity, that incident happened 50 years ago, right? Not to mention you, but Gaius too, are not the people that were directly related to that event. Additionally, I am only someone who arrived in this world not too long ago. So, why are you holding a grudge against me so much?」  
(Souma)

「! That is,」(Julius)

「Ah, please leave out killing Gaius and capturing Van. The one who began this in the first place was your side. After all, if I don't kill Gaius, then I would have been the one who was killed.」(Souma)

「Kugh.....」(Julius)

「See, you couldn't find any words to say, right? You don't have any reason to resent me after all.」(Souma)

Or rather..... The one who received the real grievances was the Kingdom's side.

「Hakuya.」(Souma)

「Yes, Your Majesty.」(Hakuya)

When I gave a sign, Hakuya took out a rolled up paper and handed it over to Julius and Jeanne. What was written on that paper were several people's names. After reading it, Jeanne was only tilting her head in confusion, but Julius became pale.

「This is..... What does this mean?」(Jeanne)

Jeanne inquired towards Hakuya, who then replied while making a respectful bow.

「The names written on this paper are those of the nobles inside the Elfrieden Kingdom who had been agitated by the Amidonia Dukedom. Among these were the people who were involved in the failed rebellion during the previous King's reign. Amidonia agitated them, kindled insurrection, instigated corruption, and incited a noncooperative attitude towards the Royal Family.」(Hakuya)

「My, my.....」(Jeanne)

Receiving the cold glance sent by Jeanne, Julius' mouth was bound close as he hung his head down. I had Hakuya investigate about those who instigated the Three Dukes (well, in the end the rebellion failed). But wow, the shady bunches were here and there. Among the names in the list, I could see the name of the nobles who had committed corruption, but I also found the names of the nobles who didn't participate in the battle and just chose to wait and see.

「Do you understand, Jeanne-dono? While pretending to cooperate in the Humanity Declaration, the Amidonia Dukedom was doing secret maneuvers behind your back. This is the revenge against the Kingdom that they always talked about.」(Souma)

「That revenge, too, in the end, is something that they adopted for their own conveniences.」(Hakuya)

As if to continue what Hakuya had said, I spoke out while glaring at Julius.

「The country is poor, it's the Kingdom's fault. The citizens are hungry, it's the Kingdom's fault. The citizens suffered from hard labor, it's the Kingdom's fault. Heavy taxation not for the citizens' sake, but for the military, this too is the Kingdom's fault.」(Souma)

「.....What do you want to say?」(Julius)

「How convenient, since if you chant the slogan of revenge, then you can hide your misgovernment and shepherd the Citizens' anger towards the Elfrieden Kingdom.」(Souma)

「You! Bastard!」(Julius)

「Julius-dono!」(Jeanne)



This time, too, Julius tried to draw near, but Jeanne 's loud voice stopped him again. Then, she sent a harsh stare at my direction.

「King Souma, I think I had myself clear that I DO NOT want you to continue inciting him.」(Jeanne)

「.....sorry. But our side ,too, would like for you to understand our irritation towards Amidonia's conducts.」(Souma)

「That is.....I can sympathize.」(Jeanne)

「Thank you. Then, there is a suggestion I want to ask from you.」(Souma)

Well, from now on, this will be the real deal, and as if to indicate this, I faced the both of them.

「Will it be acceptable for you to make Julius-dono leave the room?」(Souma)



「Who are you fooling with! Why do I need to leave the discussion for the return of the capital city of our nation?!」(Julius)

At my sudden proposal, Julius lashed out with an infuriated expression. I felt that the angry faces of a strikingly handsome guy was 50% more dreadful than a normal face. If it was the me from before coming to this world, then I would have been overwhelmed from dread and wouldn't say anything. However, up until now, I have met with various scary people like Gaius and had wagered my life to some degree. Now, I wouldn't be disturbed with only this level of intimidation.

「It's a simple story. In the first place, there is no reason to do any discussion with Amidonia.」(Souma)

「Why is that!」(Julius)

「What I placed on the negotiation table was for the Empire 『I want you to recognize Van's possession』. Conversely, the Empire has the standpoint of not recognizing border changes due to military power, so they came to negotiate 『I want Van's return to Amidonia.』, right? See, in the end, isn't the negotiation just between the Kingdom and the Empire?」

Yes, this negotiation, ever since the beginning, has been a negotiation between the Kingdom and the Empire. Julius is nothing more than an extra make that had been just sticking along the way. Since his enmity would prevent the negotiations from proceeding smoothly, it would be really helpful if he left the negotiations. Jeanne also seems to understand this.

「.....Julius-dono. Would you please leave this matter to me?」(Jeanne)

To which Julius replied.

「Jeanne-dono!? However,」(Julius)

「If both sides keep antagonizing each other, the negotiations wouldn't go anywhere. Even for the Empire, we don't want to spend too much time mediating another's country war. Since Van would surely return, I want you to entrust the negotiations to me.」(Jeanne)

「However! Then, won't the negotiations would be one-sided!?」(Julius)

「Then, should the Empire withdraw from the negotiation, so you can conduct the negotiation by yourself?」(Jeanne)

Julius wanted to keep arguing, but Jeanne shut him up with her words.

「If I can be honest, for the current case, the fault lies on Amidonia's side. We offered assistance since you are a member nation of the Humanity Declaration, but if you keep troubling us more than this, then the Empire would have to withdraw from this case.」(Jeanne)

「Kugh.....」(Julius)

Since this was something that his last ray of hope, the Empire, had said, Julius couldn't say anything back. After showing an anguished expression, he replied with a strained voice.

「Van..... You will be able to return it, right?」(Julius)

「I swear by my sister's name, Grand Chaos Empire's Empress Maria Euphoria.」  
(Jeanne)

「.....I will be glad to entrust this matter to you.」(Julius)

After Julius said this, while lowering his head and moving to leave the room, he glared towards my direction, and only then, did he exit the audience room. After watching him leave, I and Jeanne then sighed together.

「.....Sorry for my idiot member nation.」(Jeanne)

「Nah, it's me who should be the one who's sorry that our idiot neighbor is bothering you.」(Souma)

We looked at each other and laughed. The serious atmosphere had disappeared, but it didn't change the fact that the atmosphere was tense. No, rather, it could be said that the tension was higher than before. Though I heard about this later, Liscia, who was watching from beside me from the time that

Julius was in the room to up until he left, had her heart fluttering rapidly. Well..... For both the Elfrieden Kingdom and the Grand Chaos Empire, this negotiation would decide “what would happen from now on” in just a few moments, so her nervousness was understandable.

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[1] Kisama 貴様. For those who didn’t know this is a very rude Japanese way to say “You”. Almost every you that Julius use for Souma is using Kisama. While Souma refer to Julius with a rather polite you, “Kiden” 貴殿.

[2] CULTURAL NOTES:

The original RAW words are: 經世濟民 Keiseisaimin (Keisei:government-Saimin:citizen relief). This is taken from the line “經世濟俗” that Ge Hong (葛洪 283-364), a scholar who served as a government official in the Eastern Jin Dynasty (東晉 317-420), used it in his book “Bao Puzi” (抱朴子, which is his pen name, too). Then during the Sui Dynasty the lines were used by several writers which mimicked by the next writers and so on. All have the meanings of a principle of an ideal good ethical (Confucian) governance.

During the Bakumatsu period, when exchange with foreign nations introduced new concepts to the Japanese, to explain the concept of ECONOMY (oikosnomos) and political economics, the Japanese used the word 經濟 (keizai) that was taken from 經世濟民 principle.

Eventually the word 經濟 was also exported from Japanese into Chinese as 经济 and from China to all Sinosphere cultures as the word for economy.

So an economy also have an implicit about good and ethical governance.

## Chapter 03 – The Negotiations Recess

「Perhaps, the reason why you incited Julius-dono was all for this purpose?」  
(Jeanne)

As Jeanne asked, I smiled wryly and shook my head.

「That's mostly my honest opinion. Thanks to that father and son duo, the Kingdom's Reconstruction had been delayed and so I got stuck with an unwanted workload. I only wanted to vent my complaints.」(Souma)

「Is that the truth?」(Jeanne)

Jeanne asked without showing any care for it.

「I could say the same to you, why did you keep silent even though your allied country received a “verbal attack”?」(Souma)

「.....Because I don't know if the citizens' “eyes” are somewhere in this place.」  
(Jeanne)

Ah, I see. Jeanne took precautions against me possibly leaking the negotiations using the Royal Broadcast to incite the masses, just like what I had done during the Crimson Dragon Castle-Town campaign. That's why she didn't make any superfluous promises and only spoke out carefully selected words. Hmm? But when I met her at Van's marketplace, didn't she admire the way Royal Broadcast was used?

「Just by seeing the broadcast in the marketplace, did you already notice it that far?」(Souma)

「Since it was really shocking. Even I tried to think about the limits of potential uses of it. Well, their uses probably didn't stop at such trivial things either, so when Julius-dono kept rattling on, I was ill at ease.」(Jeanne)

Jeanne said those words with a wry smile. As expected, she is an opponent that I couldn't make light of.

「Even if you're worried about it, there haven't been any broadcast orbs in here since the beginning. It's different if it's just Julius. I couldn't show his unsightly scene with Jeanne-dono in front of him, since I was concerned that it will bring disgrace to the Empire.」[1](Souma)

The member-nation's fault is the leader-nation's fault, after all. Even if the Empire is an opponent in the negotiation tables, they are not an enemy in war. Or rather, they are not a country that you want to go to war with no matter what happens. So I couldn't do something like leaking the negotiation to the masses and causing the Empire's disgrace. Jeanne nodded "I see" in admiration.

「I am greatly obliged by your consideration. Let me introduce myself properly again, King Souma. I am the Grand Chaos Empire's General, Jeanne Euphoria. I visited this place as my elder sister, Maria Euphoria's, representative.」(Jeanne)

「I warmly welcome you, Jeanne-dono. I am the Elfrieden Kingdom's Acting King, Souma Kazuya.」(Souma)

As if to restart it from beginning, Jeanne and I introduced ourselves to each other again. Jeanne, who had only spoke a few words up until now, completely changed to speaking with a lighter tone. Jeanne smiled at Liscia who was beside me.

「I also greet the Princess Liscia, I am glad to see that you are well.」(Jeanne)

「Jeanne-dono, too, is in a good health.」(Liscia)

Liscia also say this while smiling.

「Huh? Do both of you know each other? 」(Souma)

「No. We had only met once when we were small. Perhaps it was before the Demon Lord's Army appeared? 」(Liscia)

「Perhaps so. Certainly it was during when you forcibly went along to the negotiations between the previous King Albert and the Foreign Minister? Since we were of the same age, we played with each other. 」(Jeanne)

I see, since they have connections as fellow royalty.

「Princess Liscia has become even stronger than she was in the old times. I can tell just by looking. 」(Jeanne)

「So has Jeanne-dono, too. Even at that time, I couldn't land a single hit. 」  
(Liscia)

No, wait a minute here! Why did the talking about playing together become a story about landing a hit!? Eh? Perhaps, by playing they meant sword-play? Even though both of them are Princesses?

「Both of you two princesses might be too tomboyish. 」(Souma)

「.....At that time even the gentle Marcus got mad. 」(Liscia)

「Our Foreign Minister was crying. Hahaha. 」(Jeanne)

Read the whole translations at [yukkuri-literature-service.blogspot.com](http://yukkuri-literature-service.blogspot.com)

No-no-no-no, it isn't something to be laughed at, right?..... Don't feel nostalgic for troubling Marcus and the Empire's Foreign Minister that I haven't met yet.

「Well, let the reminiscence end here. 」 Jeanne stopped the conversation.

「I want to start talking about the real matter seriously, but.」(Jeanne)

「.....I understand. For now, let's change the place to talk.」(Souma)

In this opportunity, I want to talk honestly without pretenses with the Empire. For that reason, it would be better if the negotiation location was a place where both sides felt comfortable with. I also wanted pen and paper.

「And, before that..... Liscia, please call Serina-san here.」(Souma)

「I understand.」(Liscia)

Liscia nodded and immediately left, after a short time, she came back with a woman wearing a maid dress. This woman was Liscia's chamber maid, Serina. She is a bit older than me, an intelligent beauty-type chamber maid that looks nice in glasses. She raised the tip of her apron skirt a bit and bowed to me and Jeanne.

「I have come just as called, Your Majesty.」(Serina)

「Serina-san. In the guest room, there is the Amidonian Ducal Pr-..... Duke, Julius-dono. Since perhaps my discussion with Jeanne-dono would take a lot of time, please accompany and entertain him as a drinking partner.」(Souma)

Serina respectfully bowed towards that order.

「I humbly oblige. Therefore, Your Majesty, I request permission to open the Akkou Liquor in the cellar of this castle.」(Serina)

When she said this, I felt that Seina's eyes were glistening strangely for a



moment. She didn't look like it, but perhaps she is actually quite a drinker. Since it was to entertain the guest, then it would be alright to drink what she wanted, right?

「I entrust it to Serina-san's discretion. If it's to entertain the guest, then I will permit it.」(Souma)

「I humbly oblige. Please leave the privilege of “pouring drinks”[2] for Julius-dono to me.」(Serina)

When she replied, Serina made an ice-like smile and then she bowed before leaving the room. Although I am bothered by that smile, well, since she said she will entertain Julius, then it might be alright. While I was thinking this, I looked at the people around me and saw that Liscia and Hakuya had their faces cramped.

「I-is something wrong?」(Souma)

「Souma..... Akkou Liquor is a liquor famous for being “strong”.」(Liscia)

「Although the taste is good when indulging in it, if someone who isn't accustomed to it drinks it, then they will quickly depart to the dream world. Actually, to drink it normally, you just need to drop two or three drops of it into juice or tea.」(Hakuya)

Liscia replied and then Hakuya supplemented the explanation while making a face as though he had a headache.

「Eh? Then, if she's “pouring drinks” using that liquor, then.....」(Souma)

「The drinking round will come to an end in just under 10 minutes.」(Hakuya)

「So you mean that there will be zero entertainment value!」(Souma)

Well, since Julius could be said as a someone from the enemy country, it doesn't really matter, but..... Serina-san, in contrast to her calm demeanor, is quite a schemer. While I was thinking about this, Liscia spoke out while pinning her fingers against her temples.[3]

「Souma, there are three people that I am no match for. They are Mother, Duke Carmine, and then Serina.」(Liscia)

「She's Liscia's chamber maid, right? Why is she on the same level as the former Queen and an Army General?」(Souma)

「It is because Serina is a maid so perfect that not only does she have an attractive face and figure, but she is also excellent in her work performance, and polite and considerate towards others. Also, for an only child like me, she is someone who I thought of as an older sister figure. However..... There is only one flaw with her.」(Liscia)

「Flaw?」(Souma)

「That is..... how should I say it, sadism tendency?..... or more precisely, behaving just like a child who is teasing something that she is interested at.....」(Liscia)

「You mean.....she is a “super-S”?[4]」(Souma)

When I asked this, Liscia had the eyes of someone who was seeing something far away.

「When I was still a naughty kid, Marcus was the one who would reprimand me, but the one who doled out the punishment was Serina. Of course, since Serina is only a maid, she wouldn't do something like corporal punishment, but in exchange, she would give mental attacks. At least..... If only at least..... No, those things also..... Ah geez, why is it that she could always and constantly find my bad points!」(Liscia)

「Just how much has she grasped your weaknesses.....?」(Souma)

While soothing Liscia, who was hanging her head down in embarrassment, I breathed out a sigh. Serina-(Super-S)-san, what a frightening child you are.....[5] I could see on the edges of my sight that Jeanne was trying to stifle her laugh.

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[1] Actually: “Makes the Empire lose face”. But... I think the reader had enough of face this face that. Though, face is, after all, important in East Asian cultures.

[2] In other words: To become drinking partners. In Japanese drinking culture, the host will be the one who will pour the drinks for the guest. I recommend readers to google and read some article about drinking culture in Japan.

In this case, Serina is ordered by Souma to keep Julius company with alcohol, etc.

[4] ㄆS or do-S is a Japanese words for extreme sadist, one who enjoys pleasure from others suffering. For example, Okita from Gintama and the fan-interpretation of Kazami Yuuka as USC from Touhou.

[5] As you can guessed, this is a line most often parodied by Japanese manga. Perhaps you might have seen the variant version in various manga. It came from Glass Mask, a classic Shoujo manga.

## Chapter 03 – The Negotiations D

The place we led Jeanne to was the government office. I thought this place was perfect for us to sit down and negotiate. It's quite spacious and there were lots of pen and paper, and we can also get any necessary materials easily. However, it seems that what drew Jeanne's attention the most when we entered the room was the bed in the corner ...

"King Soma, that bed is?"

"Mine. This place is also my private room after all"

"Do you sleep in the government office!?"

"To our utmost embarrassment ..."

Jeanne's astonishment was answered in embarrassment, not by me, but Hakuya. However, it looks like what astonished Jeanne wasn't the fact that I was sleeping in the office itself.

"I never thought there would ever be a royal who does the same thing as Elder Sister ..."

"What?"

Elder Sister ... Lady Maria she means? Eh, the Imperial Holy Maiden sleeps in her office!? When I asked her, Jeanne replied awkwardly.

"Well, she's a woman after all so she does have her own room, but when she's busy with government work she sleeps in a bed in the office"

"....."

... somehow, right now, I feel like I really really get this Holy Maiden.

“Since Elder Sister is the Holy Maiden ruling over a vast territory, I told her to stop because she would make a bad example to her subordinates, but all she said was [It’s okay, right?], she never listens, at all”, said Jeanne with a sigh. For some reason Hakuya nodded enthusiastically.

“I know. I also repeatedly told His Highness to provision a room for himself to sleep in, but each and every time, all he said was [It’s more efficient, right]”

“I know. I get that Elder Sister gets tired when she’s working, but I wanted her to behave herself in front of her subordinates. Especially that she has the image of the Holy Maiden to keep up. I wish she doesn’t show her miserable side too much”

“I know, but, I’ve already given up on that point. His Highness still bears the name of the [Hero King] but what he does is unheard-of ...”

Oi oi Hakuya. Don’t you think you went too far? Well, I didn’t really want to carry the Hero name, you see, and my unprecedented act got you guys hired, right?

... or so I wanted to say but it looks like I was going to get scolded even more so I gave up.

“I thought it’s good that King Soma does it out of being calculated. Elder Sister was only being slovenly. She’s a bit of an airhead, you know”

“Isn’t that great? It makes her a bit more cute. In His Highness’ case, it’s unseemly exactly because it was calculated. Why is it that he listens to counsel when it comes to work but not when it comes to private life”

“It seems Lord Minister has quite his share of troubles”

“As do you Lady Jeanne” 1

Jeanne and Hakuya were hitting it off. They look like they were going to break into a vigorous handshake 2 at any moment. Right then and there, the “Victims of Lazy Lieges Alliance” was born. ... this is no laughing matter. I faked a cough and prompted Jeanne to get herself seated at the long table in the center of the office.

“Anyway let’s put that aside and get the negotiations started”

“Yes. Understood”

Jeanne got herself back in order and sat down. We were seated facing one another with the long table between us.

“Now then,” said Jeanne while looking my way, opening the negotiations.

“First, regarding the current occupation of Vannes. I regret to say that I promised Julius this. The Empire must do what it must”

“Well, let’s not go straight to the end already. Here we have the Kingdom’s Head and the Empire’s Number Two having direct negotiations after all. There should be lots of things to talk about and information to share here. We can leave the unpleasant stuff for later, no?”

“... I suppose so. Also, I would like to summon our bureaucrats waiting in the other room, will that be okay?”

“Very well. If they would submit to a body check, that is. ... Is anyone there?”

I shouted at the door and then Serina came in saying, “Excuse me”.

“Huh? Weren’t you handling Julius’ reception ...?”

“‘Reception’ is over,” said Serina coolly. ... It’s still three in the afternoon now, but it’s already over? ... Like I thought, Serina is a frightening girl.

“What will it be Your Highness?”

“Ah, bring our bureaucrats and the bureaucrats Jeanne brought along. And check that they’re not carrying weapons first”

“Understood”

As I watched Serina gracefully leave, I resolved myself to “never make an enemy of her”.



A council is a dance. A bustling whirl of activity.

“So how is the situation with the Empire’s crops this year?”

“Thankfully we are generally getting a good harvest. Wheat is particularly bountiful. How about Elfrieden? You just came out of a food crisis”

“We’re getting a good harvest too. We managed to change crops in time, so there’s no need to worry about food anymore. Rather, it’s the emergency stores that’s worrying me. Even if we have it good this year, we might relapse next year or the year after”

“Well that goes for the both of us, doesn’t it. Harvest goes by the will of the heavens after all”

While Jeanne and I were talking, the Royal and Imperial bureaucrats were quietly trotting around. Some were frantically making notes of our discussion, because even a verbal promise can be an official commitment if written down on paper. Yet others were confirming what the things in those notes meant in order to not misinterpret what those commitments are. There were also those on both sides presenting prepared materials for each other, comparing what either

country had in abundance and what they lacked. Since we shared no borders it would be hard to give each other direct aid but it should be possible with a third party intermediary.

It was a battlescene. Hakuya was eyeing each and every document in detail, and Liscia was helping me. Only the guard, Aisha, was standing at attention, but she wouldn't want to look at numbers. She looked bored. ... It feels really nostalgic, reminds me of the initial days of me having been handed over the throne.

In real diplomacy, even if the respective heads only met for a few minutes, both countries' bureaucrats would negotiate for weeks or months behind the scenes. The Kingdom and Empire hadn't been able to do that since the Demon King Territory appeared, which was what led to the current hecticness. For that reason, the first thing on the list for Jeanne and I to discuss was the Reopening of the Shuttle Diplomacy between the Grand Chaos Empire and the Kingdom of Elfrieden.

"Speaking of food, those Susanna root dumplings are really delicious, aren't they. They're made from the rhizomes of the bewitching susanna, right? We would like to know how they are gathered"

"I don't mind. Well, according to Poncho, he learnt the bewitching susanna harvesting methods from a mountain tribe within the Empire. It should be easy to get their cooperation to introduce them"

"Oh my, there are people like that in the Empire. It embarasses me to not know what our own country has"

"That's how it always goes, right. You can't always see what's under your own feet"

I took a sip of the coffee Serina prepared and looked towards Jeanne.



“Agreed,” she said as she also took a sip from her tea. I tried putting a little bit of sting in my words to see how she would react but her expression never faltered. It was unthinkable that she was the same age as Liscia.

“Since we’re telling you about the susanna dumplings, we’d like to have some information as well”

“Alright. What kind of information do you want?”

“Food in exchange for food, that should be fine, right? I wonder if there’s some uncommon food the Empire knows of?”

“... then let’s give you that right away,” said Jeanne with an ominous smile.

“It’s demon meat”

“... hah?”

“You can eat demon meat”

Demon ... meat? Eh, what, really? Is she serious?

“Have you ... eaten demon meat?”

“Yes. It tastes surprisingly ordinary”

“.....”

I felt my legs becoming unsteady. Since I’ve heard about the Kobolds helping the Mystic Wolf Tribe from Tomoe, I was thinking of negotiating with the Demon King Army if circumstances allow, but ... did she say they taste ordinary? To be in a literal the-strong-eating-the-weak relationship with someone you’re going to negotiate with. It didn’t seem like it will end with just one side eating the other .... I asked with a strained voice.

“Did you possibly eat ... a goblin or something?”

Jeanne looked at me blankly for a moment then shook her head in a fluster.

“Perish the thought! What we ate were ‘demonic beasts’, not ‘demon race’. ... ah, I see, Elfrieden doesn’t know much about the Demon King Territory, right”

Jeanne seemed to understand something and nodded.

“Alright. Then I shall tell you as much about the Demon King Territory and Demon King Army as our country knows”

She then slowly began her recount.



“Firstly, the Empire doesn’t know the reason the Demon King Territory appeared in this Randia continent, either. Really, all we could say is that it just suddenly appeared there one day. Then, through the stories told by the people chased off the Territory and through actual combat with the existence known as the Demon King Army, we were able to come to a conclusion?”

“Conclusion?”

“Among the thing called the Demon King Army, there are grotesque beasts that don’t have much intelligence even though they could form packs, that simply devour living things, and there are those like Kobolds and Ogres with control like an army, that are little different from the human side. To distinguish between them, we call the former Demonic Beasts, while the latter are Demon Races”

“Ah, now that you mention it, I’ve heard something like this from previous King Alberto”

The area popularly known as the “Demon Realm” suddenly appeared at the northern end of the great continent of Randia. From there, all kinds of demons great and small came gushing forth, causing chaos among the nations. Humanity’s side united and patched together a punitive force and sent them to the afflicted area, but it ended in failure. In the Demon Realm, there existed “Demonic Beasts” with low (or no) sentience, and sapient “Demon Races” with great war strength. Those Demon Races annihilated the punitive force the nations gathered up. The Demon Races then proceeded with a counteroffense toward human territories, expanding their influence into the land that was now called the “Demon King Territory”, or so I heard. When I told Jeanne what I heard from Alberto, she made a grave nod.

“Yes, so I’ve heard. I was seven when the punitive force was sent so I didn’t really see it for myself. Except that after taking time analyzing what the people at the site said, a new fact had come to light”

“New fact?”

“The initial onslaught of monsters that destroyed many nations, killed countless people, and turned still more into refugees were all done by Demonic Beasts”

“Demonic Beasts? Not the Demon Races?”

“Yes. That was then”

Jeanne took a sip of her tea.

“The first sighting of the Demon Races was when the punitive force was ambushed. Naturally, they were there when the counteroffensive destroyed countries and killed and made refugees of people”

“Which means, there were two waves to the Demon King Army Invasion”

The first wave was a Demonic Beast onslaught. The second wave was the Demon Race counteroffensive. The Kobolds that led Tomoe's Mystic Wolf Tribe to become refugees were probably part of the second wave.

Jeanne continued.

"The damage caused by the first and second waves were also starkly different. The Demonic Beast attack of the first wave was a brutal scene. The fires the Beasts breathed turned towns into scorched earth, devouring soldiers and civilians without regard for age nor gender. I heard that all that was left of the towns they attacked were 'food scraps'"

Literally 'beasts', it was a 'Demonic Beast' attack. An attack by beasts, like locusts, that only view humans as food.

"But the second wave was a total war. Sentient beings with purpose capturing towns and villages. There were still killings and plunder, but there were lots of cases where if one were able to flee them they didn't give chase. The cases of people being killed for food dropped sharply but on the other hand, cases of rape by Demonic Beasts increased"

"... so just like any other war. Like between humans"

"Yes, although I'm reluctant to call rape a sign of intelligence," Jeanne spat. It was unforgivable for her as a fellow woman, it seems.

"But how did that change happen? Did the Demonic Beasts gain intelligence as they fought humans and become Demon Races?"

"For a time, there were church officials who said that they ate human brains and gained intelligence, but that of course wasn't what happened. It was a fact that Demonic Beasts still exist. Ever since the human and demon sides came to a deadlock, the only attacks came from packs of demonic beasts. Though, that was what allowed us to maintain the status quo"

H~m ... I don't get it. So what are these demonic races and beasts?

"That reminds me, we found heaps of demonic beast fossils when we were digging out settlement tanks near Parnam. Those were definitely at least several thousands of years old"

"Fossils ... are what, exactly?"

"Ah, it's not common knowledge in this world, I see. Simply put, they were the remains of bones of dead beasts left buried in the ground. There are certain conditions, but after many years the bones in the ground turn into stone, though even bones that were only left for several thousand years also get called fossils"

"I see ... so you're saying that demonic beasts exist from several thousands of years back"

Hm? She's surprisingly composed. Liscia almost fell over in shock when she heard it.

"... I thought you'd be more surprised"

"When you think about it, there were monsters inside dungeons even before the Demon King Territory appeared. I wonder if it used to be the site of a former dungeon?"

"There were no records of it in the Royal histories. No folklore, either. Well, it was several thousands of years ago, so I can't deny the possibility that it came from way further back than any history"

"Humm ... I suppose we should investigate our own country as well," Jeanne pensively nodded. Well, that would be more than what I'd ask for.

"By all means please do so. The Kingdom will also investigate various places"

"Please tell us if you found anything. Of course, we'll also notify you if we do"

“Understood”

Imperial territory was much much bigger than the Kingdom. One could expect more out of investigating it. But of course, the Kingdom also wanted to make progress with our own investigations. And thus it was decided that the “Sharing of Information on Domestic Excavations” would begin between the Kingdom and the Empire.

Jeanne took a breath and said, “now, we seem to have digressed quite a ways from the discussion of whether demonic beasts can be eaten or not,” as she emptied her cup of tea.

I also drained my cup of coffee and ordered Serina for refills for the both of us. We each received our refills of coffee and tea and continued the talk.

“Now that you mention it, we were talking about that, didn’t we”

“What I ate was some winged great serpent meat”

“Winged serpent? Like a dragon?”

I recall there being a deity called the Plumed Serpent (Quetzalcoatl) in Central or South America, but we’re not on Earth and since we were talking demonic beasts, what came to mind was a draconic monster. That was what I was thinking, but Jeanne shook her head.

“No, it wasn’t something that glamorous. It was literally just a snake with four bird wings growing out of its body”

The hell is that? That’s definitely a chimera, right?

“Well, you’re something, being able to eat something like that ...”

“Tastes just like a regular snake. Closer to fish than chicken, it’s quite delicious”

... well, I suppose they eat snakes normally in some countries. In my mind, snake meat brings up the image of the fake fish in Akutagawa Ryuunosuke’s “Rashomon” ... did she say delicious?

“Say now ... Jeanne, aren’t you a princess?”

“I’m also a general. Local bounties make for good army provisions”

“That makes sense”

“And what got me thinking to eat demonic beasts was when one of the scouting parties sent to the Demon King Territory saw the remains of demonic beasts having been cooked by the demon race”

“Cooked? Not just eaten on the spot?”

“Yes. Judging from the bones that looked like they were cut apart with edged tools and the heads that have charred bits, they were probably roasted whole before being cut apart and eaten. So when we caught the same kind of demonic beast, I just had to find out whether we can eat them as well”

Jeanne bit into the baked sweets served alongside the tea.

“We of course checked whether or not it was poisonous. Before giving them to humans to eat, we made animals eat them. After making sure they’re safe like that, we took turns eating them starting from the NCOs 3”

“Poison-testers have it rough ...”

“Then when we tried eating them, it was light but refreshing, it was normal

delicious”

“Um, rather than their taste, isn’t there something more important to think about?”

The fact that demon races eat demonic beasts was more profound than the fact that demonic beasts are edible. It means that the demon races don’t view demonic beasts as their equals. I love beef and pork, but no matter how similar their faces looked I never considered eating orcs or minotaurs. I’d rather eat snakes than that. Would the demons have the same kind of mentality? As I was thinking such things, I arrived at a hypothesis.

“So, Jeanne”

“Yes?”

“I wonder the demon race and demonic beasts are like ‘people’ and ‘animals’ on our side?”

+++++

3.TN: Non-commissioned officers.



## Chapter 03 – The Negotiations E

“W, why do you think so?” asked Jeanne as she recomposed her expression.

“... I’m going to be saying this off-the-rec... I mean, no mention of this to anyone please”

“... Understood”

Jeanne gave the Imperial bureaucrats a look, they stopped their busywork for a moment and quietly left the office. I as well shooed the Royal bureaucrats out and had Aisha stand in front of the door watching for any surveillance. Only Jeanne, Liscia, Hakuya, Aisha, and I remained in the room. I looked at Liscia next to me who was recording the meeting minutes.

“Liscia, you stop writing too”

“... all right”

Liscia put her pen down, so what goes on now won’t be recorded in the minutes. The room fell quiet as if the hustle and bustle earlier were only a lie. Jeanne shrugged.

“Good grief ... I wonder what kind of bomb you’re going to bring out”

“Sorry. What I’m going to say is likely going to be protested against as discrimination. If it leaked outside, it may even cause a rebellion”

“... Let’s hear it then”

“The way I see it ... I can’t tell the difference between this world’s animals and demonic creatures,” I said, choosing my words.

“Furthermore, I can’t really tell the difference between races like beastmen and dragonewts with the demon race, either”

“What!? But that’s ...”

“I know, I know. They’re going to yell at me saying Don’t put us in the same category!”

Previously, when I couldn’t tell the difference between Mystic Wolves like Tomoe and Mystic Foxes like Kaede, I said “Well, why not call them all Mystic hounds and be done with it?” Then Liscia scolded me saying, “Mystic hounds refer to Kobolds so make sure you never ever say that in front of those people, okay!” At that time, I consented, thinking well, I suppose that’s how it goes, but then what is the difference between Mystic Wolves and Foxes and Kobolds.

“Do you know what the difference between Mystic Wolves and Foxes and Kobolds, Jeanne?”

“Well of course. Mystic Wolves and Foxes have tails but their faces and bodies are in no way inferior to humans. On the other hand, Kobolds have the faces of dogs”

“But there are beastmen with animal faces, right?”

Like, for instance, Georg Carmine. If that Lion guy appeared in Japan he would first of all be probably considered a demonic creature. When I pointed that out, Jeanne crossed her arms and nodded.

“Well, now that you mention it ... h~m ... ah, right. Kobolds have furry bodies. Which means where beastmen are humans with animal parts, then Kobolds are dogs that stand on two legs like humans, I suppose”

“... then how do you tell apart demon races with short or no fur? If that’s how

your reasoning goes, then Orcs and Minotaurs with human bodies should be beastmen, right?”

“Mmmmm...”

Being retorted to, Jeanne pondered, then finally raised both hands, “I give up”

“I’ve never really thought about what makes humanity different from demons. Now that you’ve pointed it out, I noticed that we’ve been distinguishing demons and humans by feeling”

“You’re right ... now that you mention it, I can’t find any telltale differences”

“I wonder why we never noticed ...”

Liscia and Hakuya also nodded. Everyone in this world probably was the same.

“Conversely speaking, you can say that the people of this world differentiate humanity and demons by feeling, right”

Speaking of Japanese sensibilities, even if we love shellfish miso soup, we don’t even want to look at slugs, which were the terrestrial equivalent of shellfish, most of us do. Also, people would watch in shock at Australian Aboriginals eat grub they found inside of trees as they calmly eat peeled shrimp (raw ones at that). It’s likely that the sensibilities of the people of this world were along those lines.

“Well there were only humans in the world I was in. Since I lived in a world without Elves or Beastmen or Dragonewts or Demons, I don’t have those sensibilities. Which is why that in my eyes, the demon races are just the same as any other race on the human side”

“Y, Your Highness! ... d, do you hate Dark Elves?” asked Aisha, who was

standing in front of the door, with eyes like an abandoned puppy.

“Not at all,” I answered and flashed her a grin.

“Dark skinned Elves are cute, right. Of course, classic human beauties, too”

The former was for Aisha, and the latter Liscia. “Really!?” said Aisha with a brightened face as I said that while Liscia brusquely went “Yeah yeah, sure, thanks”, but not at all dissatisfied, judging from the grin on her face. Seeing the two, Jeanne wryly smiled.

“You’re loved, aren’t you”

“I have it too good ...”

As I said that, Jeanne leaned against the back of her chair.

“I’m glad you said to keep a lid on it. If we continued as we were, I might’ve had to kill off our country’s esteemed buraucrats”

“... that’s dangerous. Was it that bad?”

“It’s that bad. If what we’re talking here leaked out, it’s not only King Soma’s reputation that’ll go down. The continent might go up in a riot. Am I right, Lord Hakuya”

“It is as you say. I wish he mentioned it to me sooner”

Hakuya nodded and sent me a reproachful glare. Eh? That bad?

“Please listen Your Highness. If what you said about ‘demons and beastmen being hard to differentiate’, countries like the Human supremacist Amidonia and High Elven elitist Holy Kingdom of Gerlean will use it as material to discriminate

against other races. They'll cast doubt on whether or not beastmen and dragonewts were demons after all or colluding with the enemy, and might clamp down on them with injustice”

The Holy Kingdom of Gerlean, the island country to the northwest of the continent, huh. It had a big and small island but it seems that the small island and part of the large one had been occupied. All rumors, because this country is particularly insular and not much information could get in. High Elves, who had a high tendency of having beautiful women and men even among Elves look down on other people, believing that they're god's chosen people and despise mixed blood. This never changed even now after the demon race invasion.

Well, countries like the Principality of Amidonia and the Holy Kingdom of Gerlean would take this information as proof of their race's superiority. In fact, Amidonia made their own country easier to govern by fanning hatred towards Elfrieden (and blaming any slip-ups on the actions of the Kingdom). This was only turning the hatred against the other races. Jeanne also concurred.

“It's as Lord Hakuya said. Also, this is not an external matter for multiethnic countries like ours and yours. If that recognition was widespread within our countries, it would be cause for antagonism between races domestically. If we had internal threats in addition to the ones from outside ...”

“... sorry. I didn't think this through”

I honestly bowed my head. These two were right. This is not just a matter of my own honor. I had to have a better sense of crisis. However, Jeanne shook her head.

“We wouldn't have noticed had you not pointed it out. It's quite a problem, but this is better than it suddenly erupting without us realizing it. We can make

preparations for it, too”

“Thank you ... but that said, I can’t think of any countermeasures right away”

“I know. The Humanity Declaration prohibits exile and persecution against other races but only among countries. We could still intervene with discriminative national policies (say, by making it an order from a superior), but for the common people, we could only help supervise those countries”

That’s not going to be effective, and you can’t just deal with each and every individual case, either. If it gets buried in the dark then it’s over. Anyway, since we couldn’t get any good ideas right now, the Empire and the Kingdom should continue to deliberate this later.



We called back the bureaucrats we sent outside and continued the conference well into the night. Naturally, it was then time to fill our stomachs. Since Jeanne was a VIP from another country, we ought to have had stopped the meeting for dinner but both Jeanne and I felt it would be a waste of time so we continued conversation over food; something that we could eat while working. Therefore, I decided to treat Jeanne and company to some bread that we were investigating whether we could popularize in the country or not. Jeanne’s impressions were:

“Well this is something! While it looked mismatched to put a staple food on top of another, the two different textures when you sink your teeth into it makes for a best match. The sourness of the tomato sauce works well, too. Also, being able to eat something that you normally had to eat with a plate and fork on bread and with one hand, this is a novel idea I’m taking my hat off to! Magnificent!”

She openly praised me. Huhuhu, you’re thinking it’s a sandwich? Too bad, it’s a “Napolitan bread” 1! ... well, I actually wanted to make yakisoba bread but I couldn’t reproduce that rich sauce no matter what. Which is why I used the pasta and tomato sauce that already existed in this world and made napolitan

bread.

“I doubted the sanity of it when I first saw it, but it was really good”

“Bread and pasta aren’t something new, and yet a new texture is made when you put the two together”

Seems Liscia and Hakuya also liked it. We’re all but done dealing with the food problems, so it might be good to introduce Earth cuisine alongside novel foods like zelring udon. We could also acquire foreign currency by having a unique food culture. Anyway, the one who took to these unique menus, Aisha, was:

“Whom nom nom, huff!”

She was standing behind me as guard, but while doing that, was intently tossing the napolitan bread into her mouth. In fact, Aisha, how many have you eaten already? The mountain that was on the plate had turned into a small hillock. The hungry Dark Elf was operating normally even now.

“Phew ... now then, we should get started on the matter of the occupation of Vannes”

“.....”

After having a breather after eating the bread, Jeanne broached the topic.

“The Empire wishes to uphold the Humanity Declaration and will not recognize border changes through military action. We would like Elfrieden to return Vannes and its environs to the Principality of Amidonia”

“The Kingdom could not accept that wish. It was Amidonia who attacked first.

We have the right of it, don't you think?"

"Some would see them as the first to be induced to doing it, though?"

"It was an intervention by all definitions. It's unreasonable to complain when the attacker becomes attacked instead, no? Is the Empire okay with this? The signatory and non-signatory nations will make light of the Humanity Declaration if you allow this attack"

"That is true. Which is why the Empire would have Amidonia pay the appropriate indemnities. As far as the Empire is concerned, both parties are at fault in this matter"

... well, I suppose she's right. As a signatory of the Humanity Declaration, the Empire would have to stand by Amidonia and press Elfrieden for repatriation of territory. But that said, if they pardoned Amidonia's attack, they would invite tyranny by the signatory nations and backlash from the non-signatory nations. Which is why they would give harsh sanctions on Amidonia, making them a warning for the signatory nations. The Empire is powerful enough to do so. I sent Jeanne a testing look.

"... If we do not comply, would you escalate to military force?"

"We would prefer not to ... but yes, if necessary. Currently, the Empire only brought enough 'numbers' to be on par with the Elfrieden military, but we believe we have the 'strength' to crush both you and Amidonia together"

"I suppose. We would also like to avoid a fight"

I rested my elbows on the table and folded my hands over my mouth.

"Therefore, let's first sort out each other's intentions"

"Sort out ...?"

"The Empire does not want to recognize the border change, so you would have



the Kingdom return the occupied territory. Am I correct?”

“... yes. That is right”

Jeanne nodded. Having confirmed the Empire’s intentions, I continued.

“As for the Kingdom, we would like to completely crush Amidonia who had continually attacked us again and again. We would also want to have them pay indemnities for attacking us. We took Vannes as that indemnity”

“... I see. You mean you it doesn’t have to be Vannes in particular, right. So in other words, while you won’t return Vannes free of charge, you would be willing to return it if Amidonia pays compensation for it”

As expected, the talks are going smoothly. I nodded and Jeanne breathed a sigh.

“Do you want Lord Julius’ head?”

“While we would be glad if you did that for us, it does not hold any particular value to us”

“So ... it’s money after all, then”

“... I suppose. If Amidonia would pay us monetary indemnities, we’ll return Vannes. I can also say that the Empire could also demand payments from Amidonia, which should be about right, no?”

Looking at the long term, handing over land with buried riches for some temporary funds is a minus. However, considering that it was Amidonian territory until recently and considering relations with the Empire, it wasn’t so bad a deal. At the same time, the Empire would accomplish their just cause of restoring territory to Amidonia, and also make a warning of them to the other signatory nations that if they did something like the Amidonians did, they would

return their territory but make them pay indemnities. That also means gaining the trust of non-signatory nations. Jeanne took a breath and said.

“Lord Julius is going oppose ...”

“No sympathy for the wicked. Ah, make it in Imperial gold coins please. Julius seems hopeless at economics. He’s going to be considering using inferior gold coins for payment”

“You want to get our country involved, are you ...”

“You have managerial accountability for Amidonia’s actions this time. You could at least take that responsibility”

“... I have nothing to say to that”

Jeanne smiled wryly and shrugged. She then suddenly looked serious.

“There’s something I want to ask King Soma. Why won’t Elfrieden sign Elder Sister’s Humanity Declaration? If you did, the Empire and the Kingdom would not have been standing at odds on this matter...”

Jeanne gave Liscia a glance.

“I feel bad to say this in front of princess Liscia, but the reason the previous King Alberto did not sign the Humanity Declaration ... well, I could somewhat understand the reason. That’s because ... the reason he didn’t sign ...”

“Because he couldn’t decide whether to sign or not. He’s indecisive like that”

Jeanne seemed to find it hard to say, so Liscia clearly said it in her stead. Jeanne looked slightly apologetic as she said “that’s correct”

“However, I would think that King Soma understands the threat that the Demon King Army poses, and how important it is for humanity to band together. And yet why would you not participate in Elder Sister’s Humanity Declaration?”

She said that while looking straight at me. Well this is awkward. I didn’t want to tell her the reason yet. But if I lied and said I decided without due consideration, relations with the Empire were going to sour. I thought for a while and slowly began talking.

“Well ... there’s an ‘old story’ in my world. Once upon a time, there were the two gods of the East and the West”



The god of the East said thus:

“The world shall be equal. Therefore, O Mankind, ye shall all till the fields together, and all take equal part in its bounties”

On the other hand, the god of the West said thus:

“The world shall be free. Therefore, O Mankind, ye shall each till your own fields, and each partake in its bounties for as much as ye have worked for it”

The god of the East said to the god of the West:

“Thy way will make those who have prospered even more prosperous, and the impoverished even more impoverished. The world will be wrapped in strife between the rich and the poor”

The god of the West said to the god of the East:

“If man were to gain the same bounties no matter how hard he worked, he shall be deprived of reason to work. Thus the fruits of their labors would also decrease, and all of society shall be poor”

And thus the gods of the East and West opposed each other. The fight between the gods swept up the countries that believed in them. We are right and they are wrong. The countries of the east and west glared at each other. The ones troubled by it were the countries in the border.

Once the countries that believed in each of the gods began fighting, we would be the first to suffer. Our homes and fields will fall to ruin. Now, what are we to do. The people living in the border countries thought, and came up with an inspiration.

“That’s right. While there is nothing we could do against them opposing each other, we shall place rules to prevent a fight”

Then the people of the countries near the borders, together with many of the countries of the east and west together came about with several rules.

“First, to disallow border changes through military action”

“Second, to allow every country equal rights and self determination of their peoples”

“Third, to foster good cultural exchange with the countries of the east and west” 2



“What manner of story is that!?”

After I had said that much, Jeanne raised her voice. She looked at me suspiciously when I suddenly began telling a fairy tale, but as the story went on her eyes went wider and wider. Jeanne had been composed up to that point, but having gone this far, she seemed to have lost her composure. Liscia and Hakuya also had the same look on their faces (Aisha had a dumb look, not understanding what was going on). Jeanne hit the table hard.

“Never mind the story, but the rules are just the same as the Humanity Declaration! How does it end!?”

Jeanne wanted me to cut to the chase, but I silently shook my head.

“What happened next ... I still can’t say right now”

“King Soma!”

“I do, however, know how the story ends”

+++++++

1. TN: Not to be confused with Neapolitan bread (Pane cafone), which is actual Italian bread. Napolitan is a dish made in Japan by a Japanese that happens to be pasta-based. Kind of like yakisoba bread but with pasta.

2. TN: Clauses 3, 8, and sort-of-9 of the Helsinki Accords.

## Chapter 03 – The Negotiations F

“Did the rules ... fail to avoid a war?”

Jeanne asked, looking uneasy. I shook my head.

“Oh, no, the rules definitely worked. At least during the time the two gods antagonized each other, the worst case scenario of total war breaking out due to the two gods was avoided. The god of the east disintegrated in the end, losing the power to fight, and the god of the west felt safe and stopped their vigilance”

“So it’s a happy ending. Where’s the problem in that?”

“... well, if it ended there, everyone would have lived happily ever after”

“There’s still more?”

“This is all I can say for now. Sorry, but I can’t show my hand just yet”

I cut off the conversation with a strong tone. Jeanne seemed to be even more curious, but abandoned it when she saw my eyes. When I relaxed my shoulders, I said to Jeanne.

“You don’t need to worry, you’ll find out in time. It won’t be any trouble for the Empire”

“... it’s disconcerting”

“I want you to trust me on this, but as far as our country is concerned, we want to walk in step with yours. As long as Empress Maria upholds that ‘humanity should band together and fight the Demon King Army’, the Kingdom will not be your enemy”

Jeanne looked at me doubtfully.

“You didn’t sign the Humanity Declaration, and you still want us to believe you?”

“The Humanity Declaration isn’t the only treaty there is, right? We couldn’t be part of the Humanity Declaration, but I think our country could agree to a bilateral alliance with the Empire. A secret one”

“Secret alliance ... is it?”

I made a clear nod.

“We would be settling our domestic matters soon, and we’ll be reforming the military next. We plan on rebuilding the military with the intent of having them move with one will. Also, we’ve de-clawed Amidonia with this incident, so we no longer need to reserve some of our military on the western front. The Army of Elfrieden can now move freely. ... and there it is. Right now, the Empire had received calls from the Confederation of Eastern Nations for reinforcements, right?”

“... yes. They’re mostly an assortment of small countries, but most of them are signatories of the Humanity Declaration. As the leader, we would of course send troops to their aid”

“There it is. I’m wondering if you can’t leave that task to us”

What I’m proposing is this: At the center of this continent there was the Star Dragon Mountain Range where wise dragons live in their natural defenses. If the demons wanted to go south, they would have to invade through its west or east. At the western side there was the Empire, but an attack through the east would be handled by the Kingdom. Concretely speaking, if the Confederation of Eastern Nations called for military support, the Kingdom would dispatch relief forces. However, there are procedures for that.

“At that moment, when the Empire as the leader of the Humanity Declaration received the appeal, you would sound out to the Kingdom, and we would respond to your call and dispatch troops. That’s how we’ll do it on the surface”

“... It seems somehow, slow. What for?”

“Power-wise, we still can’t be called a large country, but territory-wise, we rank second if we exclude the Demon King Territory. If word goes out that the largest and second largest countries joined in an alliance, countries are going to go on alert. In particular, Amidonia, Mercenary Nation Zem, and the Republic of Torgis, who’d be sandwiched between us. That’s why we don’t want it to be known that the Kingdom and the Empire are in an alliance”

“I see. That’s why you wanted a secret alliance”

Jeanne made a thoughtful face, probably thinking what the plus and minuses were there for the Kingdom. However, the Empire had nothing to lose by doing so. They could spare the troops they would’ve sent east and strengthened the defense on the western side where their country touches the Demon King Territory. If there’s anything they’d be worried about, it would be our intentions ... but Jeanne finally made a big nod.

“I don’t think there’d be any loss to us to accept that. However, is there really any benefits to you to do that?”

“If pressed to ask, then I’d say it’s to have the trust of the Empire. That, and by participating in the war, you wouldn’t be asking for any support money afterwards”

“Well, of course. That was only asked of the countries that don’t participate in the war ... but are you sure? I don’t think it can be called a benefit ...”

“... well, it doesn’t pay to be mercenary when the existence of humanity is at stake. Other countries won’t look at us kindly if we acted indifferent even though we’re stable”



“I see ...”

Jeanne folded her arms and groaned, “hmm”

“In that case then the problem is how close the cooperation would be. The Empire and the Kingdom is on either ends of the continent, so it would take time to convey our intentions. It’s good to be able to deflect relief appeals but the time it would take will be a problem”

“About that, I’ve thought of something. ... Hakuya, bring that”

“Yes”

Hakuya stood up and left the room. He came back carrying a box. He then presented the box to Jeanne. The latter received the box with a perplexed face.

“And what might this be?”

“Feel free to open it. I want Lady Maria to have it”

“...? This is ... a receiver device? Ah!”

Jeanne seemed to have noticed. Inside the box, there was a simple receiver device I used when giving Georg and the others the Final Counsel.

“That receiver has been tuned to one of our country’s orbs. I would like madam Jeanne to send me one of the Empire’s when you get back there. Tuned to one of the Empire’s orbs as well, of course. We could then contact each other any time”

“My ...”

In other words, using both countries’ orbs and simple receivers, we would

create a hotline between the Empire and the Kingdom. Unlike the orbs, you can carry the receivers on foot just fine. When either country contacts the other via the receiver, the other could simply go to where the orb is and open a conference session. We couldn't send any documents this way since we're only getting transmissions, but it would be possible when combined with bureaucrat-level shuttle diplomacy. Jeanne was impressed by the proposal.

"Then even Elder Sis who couldn't leave the Empire could easily converse ... what should I say, King Soma's power of imagination gives me the chills"

"But you exaggerate. It's a common thing in the world I came from"

"To think something like this is common ... um, Soma, your highness. If I may say something rash ..."

"Hm? Let's hear it"

"Thank you very much. Also ... Princess Liscia"

"Eh, me!?"

Liscia was startled from being suddenly called to, but Jeanne continued without minding.

"Won't you return the throne to Lord Alberto? The Empire is willing to wholeheartedly support him"

Recommendation to abdicate. Hold on, what is she saying to a country's King!? Liscia was taken aback for a moment but after having processed the statement her face turned red.

"What are you saying all of a sudden! That will certainly not happen!"

"Why not? This is Lord ALberto's Kingdom to begin with. Then as Lord Soma is free, come over to us! If you do you can be a prime minister or any rank you

want! I'll even throw in my Elder Sister now, so please be our Emperor!"

"Are you out of your mind!? Do you understand what you're saying!?"

"Of course I do. Lord Soma's ideas will lead to a new era. I want to see what kind of Empire Lord Soma could make with Elder Sis. ... had we known we wouldn't have accepted the war support money and got Lord Soma to come at all costs. Would you be willing to come over now?"

Before I could say anything, Liscia loudly slammed the table.

"OF COURSE HE WOULDN'T! Soma is my ... our country's indispensable person!"

She made a menacing look, showing her fangs. I'm honestly happy that she thought so highly of me, but we're in a negotiation right now. I pat Liscia's head.

"Calm down Liscia. I'm not going anywhere, okay?"

"... Sorry. I lost my cool there"

"You to Aisha. Stay! Hands off the sword handle"

"A, aren't you treating me too roughly!?"

Ignoring Aisha's protests, I looked at Jeanne.

"Sorry, but I can't accept that"

"Fuh ... all right. However, it's true that we're regretting it"

Jeanne bowed her head, "thank you for listening to my rude remarks"

“Returning to the topic of alliance ... such an important issue cannot be decided by me alone. Since you have magnificently suggested a top-level conference using the Royal Broadcasts, I think it’s proper if you personally discuss this with Elder Sister. In line with that, I would like to return to the Empire with a few of your diplomats, and leave some of ours to take to the Kingdom”

“We of course need to exchange signed documents. Hum ... how about this. Appoint one of the diplomatic delegation as Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary 12 and establish an Embassy on both countries’ capitals. It would be inefficient to travel back and forth everytime we need to come to a decision.

“That would be magnificent! We shall put it under consideration right away. Really ... King Soma’s wisdom is an ever-welling spring”

“Like I said, it’s not mine”

Afterwards, Jeanne and I came to a mutual understanding and discussed many things. Like, about how Lady Maria wanted to stop slavery. She had been wanting to abolish this hotbed of human trafficking, but now with the looming threat from the Demon King Territory, she was able to do so under the name of Human Solidarity. Having anticipated that this would be hard to accomplish in times of peace and that she should do it now, it looks like she’s not just a ‘flower child’.

As for myself, I also agree that we should stop slavery 3, but I thought it was too early for it and decided to “wait”. Sudden changes, even though (I think) it was good, would lead to chaos. Having known how much chaos the Arab Spring (I don’t mean to decry the movement itself, of course) engendered in the surrounding countries, I had been careful about these things.

That was why, regarding slavery, I mentioned to the Empire that it should be done a step at a time, and if possible to match with the movements the Kingdom

was pushing.

... that kind of important stuff came out one after the other, so the bureaucrats on both sides were running around in a mad rush. They continued until late at night, even after the conference had been settled. I'm sure they would be staying up all night. Giving the bureaucrats a side glance, I took Liscia and Jeanne out to the office balcony.



It was late autumn and also late at night, the air was chilly. I asked Selina to prepare hot milk in mug-sized wooden cups, not necessarily to celebrate the successful end of negotiations with, but just to have a toast between us three.

“To the prosperity of the Empire,” said Liscia, raising her cup.

“To the growth of the Kingdom,” said Jeanne, raising her cup.

“To the friendship between both our countries,” I said, rising my cup.

“”” Cheers! “””

We raised our wooden mugs. Since they've got hot milk inside, we only sipped them (we'd get burned if we gulped them down) ... but, ah, this is delicious. I've been enjoying the great taste of cows' milk since I came to this world. Because far from being pasteurized, they're not even sterilized <sup>4</sup>, they don't destroy the taste of the milk. Even though it's a safety problem ... I can't have enough of this!

“We've got a lot of profit from the conference this time, haven't we now,” said Jeanne as she relaxedly savored the hot milk.

“The talks got really loing. It’s almost dawn already”

“... Now that I think back to it, we even talked about things we didn’t need to mention today”

Since we’ve made a Royal Broadcast hotline already, we could have discussed a number of agenda later. Because of that, I felt we did something bad to the bureaucrats.

“We got into a strange mood since it went well into the night ...”

“Can’t be helped. We’re happy to have gained a reliable friend,” Jeanne said, laughing.

Friend, is it? Well, since we have a secret alliance, we could call the Empire our friends. As for how this secret alliance is going to influence the world later ... I still can’t clearly say, but it’s reassuring to have another country with the same values as we do. The Empire should feel the same way. Then, Jeanne’s face suddenly turned serious.

“There’s something we would like to tell our eastern friend”

“What is it? O western friend”

“About the entity called the ‘Demon King’ in the Demon King Territory”

Demon King. In RPG terms, an entity dominating the demonic beasts and demon races. While not certain, it seems that such an entity exists, or so the previous King Alberto said.

“Have Lady Jeanne ever seen him?”

“No, in fact, nobody has. While the punitive force did penetrate to the deepest part of the Demon King Territory, that force came to almost complete annihilation”

“Hm? Then did you figure something out?”

“There are some among the demon races that seemed to possess capacity for language. We don’t understand the language, but there’s a word that seems to be frequently spoken. Our country’s researchers believed that the word is the name of the Demon King”

Jeanne paused there, then spoke the word as if pronouncing a verdict.

“The word is ... Diable Roi 5”

“Diable Roi ... ‘Demon King Diable Roi’?”

“Yes. That’s what they say the Demon King’s name was”

Jeanne made a solemn nod. Demon King Diable Roi ... hm?

“Demon King Diable Roi ... Demon King ... Diable Roi ... Demon King ...”

Huh? What the? I think I remember hearing this phrase before. A déjà vu? ... no, it isn’t. I’ve heard it before. Where? Where? Not here, but where? Not in this world. So the last world? No, wait. Why Earth? There’s no Demon King on Earth. Why? I shouldn’t know any Diable Roi. And yet, why is it stuck on my mind?

“W, what’s wrong Soma!?”

When I came to, I was being supported by Liscia. Seems like I was holding my head and went unsteady. Seeing Liscia and Jeanne worried, I smiled and said

“I’m alright”

“I just feel tired all of a sudden”

“Hum, it is late after all. Let’s call it a day”

Since Jeanne offered, we decided to officially announce what we decided tonight at noon tomorrow in the audience chamber with Julius present, and retire for the day. I asked Serina to show Jeanne to her room while Liscia and I went to Liscia’s room. I want to get to bed right away but since my bed was in the office, I can’t sleep with the bureaucrats working. Which is why I thought to borrow a corner of Liscia’s room.

“Soma ... are you really okay?”

When we got to the room, Liscia asked me worriedly.

“... I’m alright. Just a little tired”

“Liar! Soma who could stay up three nights normally wouldn’t get so tired after only one night!”

“Hey now, being figured out from that is a little ...”

“Haah ... come”

Liscia sat down on the bed and urged me to sit next to her. It’s a heart pounding situation to sit side by side with a cute girl, but being put under the pressure of Liscia’s no-nonsense air, I quietly abided. When I did, Liscia held my head in her arms and laid it down on her lap. She’s giving me the second lap pillow since the date at Parnam. Liscia’s gentle voice came down on me from above.



“It’s fine if you don’t want to tell me the reason, but at least rely on me when you’re tired”

Liscia caressed my forehead.

“... Sorry. And thanks”

“Fufu, you’re welcome”

I closed my eyes and relaxed. The feeling of unease I felt when I heard the name Diable Roi and felt it familiar still hadn’t disappeared, but my heart was at ease just by having my head caressed. I was able to fall asleep without worry thanks to Liscia.

++++++

1.TN: Ambassador Extraordinary: An ambassador on a permanent mission on foreign soil, as opposed to ambassadors ordinary, who are sent abroad for singular missions.

2.TN: Ambassador Plenipotentiary: An ambassador with full authority to represent the head of state.

3.but in my case, it’s out of economic rather than humanitarian concerns: I wanted to have them be free citizens and start making money as soon as possible.

4.After being milked out, they probably only put it in a metal tub like in “A Dog of Flanders” and cool it down with well or river water

5.TN: Literally Demon King. “Devil King”, actually.

## Chapter 03 – The Negotiations G: Withdrawal

The afternoon the day after we established a secret alliance with the Grand Chaos Empire, Jeanne, Julius, and I were once again gathered in the audience chamber. Everyone was standing (only I was sitting on the throne), and Hakuya who stood diagonally in front of me stepped up to Julius' party, carrying a document containing what we had decided the night before.

"The Royal Army will leave Vannes and return to the Kingdom of Elfrieden"

The moment Hakuya made the declaration, Julius had a victorious look on his face, but then Hakuya continued.

"In return for that, The Principality of Amidonia will pay indemnities to the Kingdom of Elfrieden. This will be considered separately from the exchange of prisoners of war"

Hearing the sentence, Julius turned pale. He then approached Jeanne.

"Lady Jeanne! What is the meaning of this!?"

"It means what it means ... the Empire has returned the territory as promised"

Jeanne shrugged. Julius could not accept it.

"Do you take me for a fool! To pay indemnities, it's as if we were defeated!"

"You *were* defeated. Have you no realization of it?"

"We were not! We have not been defeated. We have lost but merely a single city!"

"... Then do as you like. The Empire will no longer involve ourselves in this fight. Have a ceasefire or keep fighting as you want"

Hearing that from Jeanne, Julius groaned. Seeing him do so, Jeanne sighed.

"To begin with, that single city ... well, I doubt the propriety of calling the capital a *mere*city, but you came crying to us because you were unable to take back the capital you lost, didn't you? Then you have lost this war. As the head of the Humanity Declaration, the Empire will restore the borders that had been changed to its original state. We can not do anything more than that"

"But, indemnities ..."

“Lord Julius. My Elder Sister Maria is terribly distressed with regards to the current situation”

Jeanne turned a cold look of rejection at Julius.

“You have committed an act of aggression, making use of a loophole in the Humanity Declaration meant to unify all of humanity under the looming threat of the Demon King Territory. As its head, we cannot let this matter be”

“That is ... the previous King Gaius ...”

“Even so, you did nothing to stop it, and you also have a responsibility to the citizens of the Principality. Either way, in order to prevent any other aggressors from among the signatories of the Humanity Declaration, we have decided that harsh punishment is necessary. We will have the matter of your country set as a precedent”

Uwaah ... she was polite but she was actually saying “we’re making an example of you to tighten the noose around the necks of the Humanity Declaration signatories”. Julius made an angry, or maybe distressed face. He tightened his fist and said.

“... what if we don’t want to”

“Then like I said before, you may do as you like. The Empire will stay our hand from this fight, and we shall have the Principality of Amidonia leave the Humanity Declaration”

“P, please wait a moment! If you do that then our country ...”

“Yes, if you’re not a member country, then an attack on you will not be in violation of the Declaration. You ... excuse me, *your Lord Father* also had the same opinion on the matter, did he not?”

The Principality of Amidonia was surrounded by other countries on all sides. On the west side, there’s the permanently neutral “Mercenary Nation of Zem” who seeks the best situation for itself. On the south, there’s the “Republic of Torgis” who also didn’t sign the Humanity Declaration and had northernly expansionist policies. On the north, there’s the “Lunaria Orthodox Empire”, that was signatory to the declaration, but had different sense of values compared to other countries. And lastly, there’s the Kingdom of Elfrieden on the east. Now, if they lost the protection of the Humanity Declaration, they were going to be eaten up by those tigers (ah, but not us, though).

The previous Prince Gaius VIII maintained his country by allying with the Empire, contracting the Zemish, overpowering Elfrieden under the weak rule of the previous King, and a display of military strength against the south, achieving a balanced diplomacy. Does Julius have the capability for that? Even if he did, does the young Julius have enough influence to wield for it? Influence is normally gained gradually while under the previous ruler, but Gaius was no longer here.

Julius would henceforth have to handle the difficult problems of external threats and internal leadership of his subordinates. If during that crucial time he were to leave the Humanity Declaration, he would be unable to borrow the Empire's influence and quickly fall into a 'checkmate'. Julius understood that, too, and thus he bitterly bowed his head to Jeanne.

"... we will, comply to your wishes"

"That is a good decision, Lord Julius"

Since the discussion had come to a conclusion, we proceeded with the essential payment amount. We presented an amount that equaled to three years of Amidonia's national income, to be paid in yearly installments over ten years. Also, we requested that it be paid in Imperial gold coins. In other words, we were asking to almost a third of their national income for the next ten years. Julius naturally objected, but Jeanne persuaded (coerced?) him to agree. For Amidonia, who spends half its national income on military, this had the implication of robbing them of this military power. They would be able to pay the amount by downsizing the military, but I'm not sure if Amidonia would be able to do that.

"Lady Jeanne. What if the payment is delayed"

"Very well. Then the Empire will authorize Vannes' transfer to Elfrieden"

"Kuh ..."

Julius was mortified, but said no more. Having concluded that, I made Jeanne a proposal.

"But Lady Jeanne. It's possible that they would delay the payments while hardening the defense of Vannes. Even if the Empire is involved, it would be a lot of trouble to take a capital that had been released. Therefore, we would like to have a collateral for the payments"

“A collateral?”

“Something for us to hold on to until the payments are made. If they become unable to pay, the collateral will become ours. We will of course return it once the payments are made”

“I see ... so what do you want?”

“Their Royal Broadcast orb”

“What! Our country only has one of those!”

Julius was indignant. Well, the Royal Broadcast was a treasure that could not be made with current technology. It would likely be worth about two years of Aminodia’s annual income.

“You’re not using it anyway, are you? Is there any problem with giving it to us?”

“Foolishness! Are you trying to solicit our citizens!”

“You can simply change the frequencies on the receivers, right? That way you won’t be receiving any broadcast from Elfrieden”

“Ugh ... but still ...”

Julius’ face was anguished, but unexpectedly, complied without resistance. He only used it for scheduled broadcasts at the start of each year, even though it’s so useful. Julius who adopted a military first doctrine wouldn’t understand its value. I think he might even only be considering it as a huge ornament.

As I was thinking that, Hakuya whispered, “Your highness, if I may?”

I raised my eyebrow.

“Uh ... isn’t that just your hobby?”

“What are you saying? ... it’s the crystallization of wisdom”

“Humm ... well, listen up, Lord Julius”

“... what is it?”

“To make up for the deficit in collateral <sup>1</sup>, we would like custody of all the books in this castle”

This was what Hakuya proposed. The custody of the books gathering dust in the Amidonian archives. Paper is still precious in this world and books aren’t widely circulated. It’s very possible that Amidonia had books that Elfrieden didn’t

have. Also, when it comes to books, there's the possibility of copying them while they're under our supervision. Julius snorted.

"Fine, I suppose. But don't you touch anything else. Especially the weapons and armor. I won't forgive you if you took them"

"We sold some out for raising funds"

"Gh, then don't touch anything more!"

"... alright"

So weapons are more important than books? Considering the era, that might've been the dominant line of thinking, but he didn't understand the gravity of letting such a crystallization of the country's knowledge outside. Looking at Jeanne, she seemed to be thinking the same thing and wryly smiled. Now that the discussion on indemnities is done, we could start on discussing everything else.

"We want Elfrieden to return the soldiers taken prisoner by the Elfrieden Army"

"Alright, but anyone ranked noble or knight or higher will have to be ransomed"

"... fine"

"However, we have conducted investigations on war criminals who attacked villages and plundered towns while in our countries, and drew up a list of them. Those among the prisoners who are on the list will be judged by our country and could not be returned. Also, there are names on the list who are in your country, we would like you to hand them over. The return of prisoners won't begin until that happens"

"Guh ... very well. ... by the way"

While receiving the list of criminals from Hakuya, Julius said:

"Is Roroa among the prisoners you will be returning?"

Roroa? who's that?

"I don't know. Who is that?"

"Roroa Amidonia. My younger sister who had gone missing. She should've been in Vannes during the battle"

"Sister? When Vannes capitulated, we let everyone who want to leave do so. The only noble or knight ranked people who remained was only Margarita. We

received no information on whether we had captured a royal”

“... fine then”

Like that, Julius stopped the discussion as if he had no interest in it. His sister’s missing, right? But he’s really acting nonchalant about it. Isn’t he worried?

“Do you need us to look for eyewitnesses?”

“No need”

“No need ...?”

Hakuya then whispered into my ear.

*“(It is likely that he is wary against a struggle for family headship. Based on what I’ve investigated, Lady Roroo is a supporter of civil affairs, a rare personage in Amidonia. As a military patron, Lord Julius isn’t popular among civil officials. He must be afraid that they would reject him and support Roroo)”*

*“(Isn’t she his only family now that Gaius is gone?)”*

*“(Royals are often like that)”*

*“(... I suppose so)”*

Even looking through Earth’s history, family struggles aren’t rare among royals. Similarly in Elfrieden, when Liscia’s mother inherited the throne, the family was close to annihilation due to family struggles. But still ... as someone who knew the loneliness of not having family, I thought he would’ve at least cherish his one and only sister. I guess I just can’t see eye to eye with Julius after all.

“Ah, that’s right. Speaking of Margarita, the Kingdom would like to have her. Since she cooperated with the pacifying of Vannes, you’d be troubled how to treat her, right?”

“Margarita Wanda? ... hmph, I will agree on the condition that you release five of the noble prisoners in your custody”

Saying that, Julius made a sort-of unpleasant look as if he’s sizing up for an advantage. Rather than a general he’d find hard to manage, he finds the ransom of his obedient subordinates more beneficial.

“... alright”

“Hmph, to want a general of that level, the Kingdom must be running short on leaders”

I caught myself wanting to tell him ‘the reason you lost is because you only evaluate people’s worth on their military strength like that!’, but since there’s no need for me to give help to my enemy, I held myself back.

Once the major talks had concluded, I declared the end of the negotiations. The conclusion was that “The Kingdom of Elfrieden will return Vannes, in return for a sum of indemnities paid”, “Amidonia will regain Vannes in return for paying those indemnities”, and that “The Empire will make itself known as the arbitrator of this dispute”, which was satisfactory. Amidonia was the only losing party, as the Empire shouldered no losses and the Kingdom gained decent, even though not great, profits.

“Lord Julius”

After the discussions had concluded, Julius made to turn around as if saying that he had nothing more to say to me, but I called him out.

“... what?”

“A Political Thinker of my world (Machiavelli) said this: ‘Those who by valorous ways become princes acquire a principality with difficulty but they keep it with ease <sup>2</sup>. Those who solely by good fortune become princes have little trouble in rising but much in keeping atop’ <sup>3</sup>”

“Hm? What do you mean?”

Julius turned around and glared straight at me.

“I have gained Vannes through a fight against you all. I chased away almost all the nobles and knights, eliminating anyone that might become my political opponents. Thus if I were to continue governing Vannes there would not be any significant trouble. But can you say the same?”

“What are you saying? This is my country to begin with”

“But it was Elfrieden’s territory until just now. Then, you relied on the ‘Empire’s Dignity’, that is to say *the strength of another*, to take it back. This is what Machiavelli refers to by ‘solely by good fortune becoming princes’”

In history, there are those who gained lordship through familial authority or the backing of powerful states. However, those who quickly rose in the world with such a backing would lose their fortunes the moment the backing disappears. The ideal ruler Machiavelli envisioned, the Italian *condottiero* Cesare



Borgia, fell from grace when the backing that was his father, the Pope of Rome, Alexander, died. Or maybe like when during the war between Xiang Yu and Gaozu, the latter installed the King Of Chu from a peasant, only to kill him once he judged his usefulness was over.

Julius, who borrowed the Empire's authority to take back his own capital would surely be made light of by the lords and peasants of Amidonia alike, and Gaius VIII who struck fear through force of arms was no longer here. So there's wondering if Julius who had been destroyed so impactfully could control the lords, if he could befriend the masses of Vannes better than me and gain their trust.

“‘Those who without difficulty gain their princehood must expend great efforts afterwards’. Rather than nursing your grudge, I think you should rather govern for the sake of the people first”

“That's none of your business!”

Summarily rejecting my insincere advice, Julius left the premises. Left behind, Jeanne shrugged and said, “oh well”. I stepped up to her and shook hands.

“Then I shall take my leave”

“It was a most beneficial discussion. Please send my regards to Lady Maria”

“Certainly. Lord Hakuya, as well, may you be healthy. Let us share our gripes against our lieges over some drinks sometime [4](#)”

“Very well. I shall prepare a cask of wine to bring over”

The hell? They have enough complaints to prepare a wine barrel over? When I glared at him he so obviously looked away. Seeing that, Jeanne chuckled.

“Let us meet as equals next time. I will look forward to the day Elder Sister and King Soma stand side by side against the Demon King”

“... As do I. I will look forward to it as well”

We grasped hands tightly. My response was late, because for a moment the words ‘stand side by side’ caught in my mind. How far could I advance Elfrieden's ‘era’ until that time comes? I want to at least make it so that the vehicle that carries the King to the battlefield to ‘not be a horse’ by then.



Once the withdrawal was decided, the Elfriedenian Army quickly moved. Now that Vannes' return was decided, it would be a waste of war funds to stay any more. The Elfriedenian Army pulled their troops back just as grandly as they did when they came in. The number of Amidonian troops near Vannes were so small and were still under watch by the Imperial army, there was no need to worry about being pursued.

Just like when we came, I was in the middle of the procession, riding side by side with Liscia, on a horse with Aisha guiding the reins. The eyes of the citizens of Vannes were full of fear when we came in, but now the atmosphere had changed somewhat. Without there even being any proclamation, the masses gathered along the procession route, with somewhat anxious attitudes. Liscia was looking dubious.

"I wonder why everyone's looking like that? I'd understand if they were happy being released or relieved that we finally left ..."

"They're probably worried. They're coming back under Amidonia after all"

"Worried? They're just going back to how they were, right?"

"That's exactly why. The fact that *they're going back to how they were* is worrying them"

I said as I looked straight ahead.

"Vannes was ruled under the tyranny of the Amidonian Royal Family. They never questioned it when it was a matter of course, but now they found out under the occupation of the Royal Army that it's not the natural course of things. That's because unlike the Prince, I allowed them certain freedoms like expression. That's why now that we're leaving, they become anxious that they would return to a life under oppression again"

Well ... that's probably how it is. Once Julius entered Vannes, I'm sure he would strangle this lax atmosphere. Liscia looked at the people along the procession with pity.

"To not be able to return to their former lives because of knowing freedom ... it's like an addiction"

"I think that's a strange way of putting it ... can't you have worded it a little better?"

“That’s the truth, right? But it’s their own country, isn’t it? Is it so easy to switch their identities just like that?”

“There’s a saying in my world, ‘tyrrany is more dreadful than a tiger’. In this case, ‘despotism is more hateful than a conqueror’, I suppose. The masses don’t care much for duty and honor. If their own country benefits themselves they will defend it, and if another country benefits them they will open the gates willingly”

As I said that, Liscia sighed, “fuuh”

“It’s always about the dirty side of the world when I’m walking with you”  
“You hate it?”

“” That’s exactly not it! “”

“Why is Aisha answering too!?”

“I’ve never felt it a misery to walk by Your Highness!”

She’s too loyal to me. At this rate, it wouldn’t be weird if she gets the nickname ‘The King’s Dog’ soon. Seeing Aisha like that, Liscia giggled.

“I feel the same way. I’m willing to accept reality if it’s with you, no matter how it is.

“... I see”

Now then, let us return. To our Kingdom.

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1. TN: the collateral is two years’ worth of income while the principal is three years’
  2. TN: *The Prince*, Chapter VI
  3. TN: *The Prince*, Chapter VII

## Chapter 04 – The Lion in a Cage

Several days had passed since our return to the Capital City Parnam from Van.

I am now in front of the prison underneath Parnam Castle. There is no light source other than torches, so it is dim. From the fact that it is located inside the castle, it could be easy to surmise that there are many people of high ranks who have entered this prison. Chiefly, imprisoned as political prisoners. Inside such a dungeon, I am faced with someone behind the bars. After a lull of silence for a passing moment, I addressed the person inside the cell.

「This is the first time we have met personally like this. I am the Temporary King, Souma Kazuya.」(Souma)

「It is my pleasure to meet you. I am Georg Carmine.」(Georg)

While giving his greeting, the former Army's Supreme General, the Lion-faced beastman, Georg Carmine, bowed his head deeply. In contrast with me, who was sitting on the chair, Georg sat directly on the cell floor, cross legged just like how a commander in Sengoku Japan would sit when having an audience with his lord.

[1] While still bowing his head, Georg began to talk,

「Once again, I give my sincere congratulations for the war this time.」(Georg)

Georg's imprisonment in this place happened several days before our return. Until then, he was under house arrest at Randell Castle, so he must have gathered the information back then.

「Raise your face. It is hard to talk with that posture.」(Souma)

「As you wish, Your Majesty.」(Georg)

Georg raised his head and moved his body upright to face me. Because his body has a burly physique, with a stature close to 2 meters, our eyes were at the same level even though I was sitting on a chair. 『Magnificent』..... such an expression suited him as a military man. I understood why Liscia respects him. It was hard not to be overwhelmed by his atmosphere. He has such an amazing presence, even so, he is the youngest amongst the three dukes. I'm positive that Castor is about 160 years old. While for Excel, she had passed 500 years.

「Doesn't the true ages of the Three Dukes seem to be the opposite from their outer appearances? Also in the mental age aspect, too.」(Souma)

When I mentioned this, Georg laughed 「Gahaha.」

「Certainly. It is typical for the long living races that the body and mind's growth could be said as slow. For a long living race, it's been said that their appearance and mental age is  $(\text{their true age}) \times (\text{human or beastkin's usual maximum lifespan} <\text{about } 100>) \div (\text{that race's usual maximum lifespan}).$ 」  
(Georg)

I see. It could be said that this world had something similar to 『for the Crane one thousand years, the Tortoise ten thousand years』[2] that is 『for the Dragonewt Race five hundred years, the Sea Dragon Tribe one thousand years.』 for the symbol of longevity (but in this world, they really do live up until that age). In other words, Castor is  $160 \times 100 \div 500$ , so he is still just 32 years old (human equivalent). If we think along these lines, then I could understand why he still had his muscle-brained attitude,..... Eh? Wait a minute!

「If we use that theory, then isn't Excel's mental age already 50 years old?」  
(Souma)

「.....In everything, there is an exception.」(Georg)

「Don't just overlook on this.」(Souma)

From that casual conversation, after a breather, I moved on to the main business.

「.....If I meet with that you, there are a lot of things I want to say to and ask from you.」(Souma)

「By all means.」(B)

「Well, before that, it seems you haven't met with Liscia yet.」(Souma)

When I brought this matter up, Georg slowly closed his eyes. Since her return to Parnam, it seems that Liscia had once had requested to meet with Georg. However Georg, yelled 『Your Lady is someone who will soon become the queen, how could you request to meet with a criminal?』(although to be accurate, it was the prison guard who sent the verbal message) and drove her away. Since Liscia has a really serious personality, she reacted heavily to those words. Since then, she has never made another meeting request. Each and every day, she is stout heartedly endured it.

「.....That's why, I don't think this situation is alright.」(Souma)

「My farewell with the Princess had been finished at the Final Counsel. There is no longer any need for words for now.」(Georg)

「The time when she cut her hair?」(Souma)

「I have seen the Princess' resolution with that deed. As a person, as a women, Princess has splendidly archived her independence. I don't want to cloud that resolution, influencing it by this fading body.」

He rejected for Liscia's sake? Good grief..... this obstinate old man.

「There is something that I want to ask.」(Georg)

「What is it?」(Souma)

「It is about the people who followed our treason, what will happen to the soldiers of the Army and the Air Force? Then, how will you deal with the treacherous nobles who have committed dishonest deeds?」(Georg)

「The soldiers from the Army and the Air Force have obtained meritorious deeds in the war against Amidonia, and so are pardoned of their crime. The Vargas House had committed high-treason against me, but they have accomplished many meritorious services until the previous King's reign. The only people who will be implicated would be Castor and Carla. The duchy will be abolished, but I will let the eldest son, who had severed connections with the House beforehand and was in the care of Excel, to succeed the House and permit him to possess only the Crimson Dragon Castle-Town. But then, since that child is still young, his mother Axera and the chamberlain Tormann will become his counselors. As for Castor and Carla, since Excel had appealed for them by relinquishing her war merits, they will receive my personal judgment at a later date.」(Souma)

Georg closed his eyes. I wonder what he felt when he heard all this.

「Then, for the dishonest nobles..... on top of the abolition of their Family Name, confiscation of their territories and assets..... execution. The main perpetrator will be publicly executed, while the other implicated people will be dealt with in private.」

The existing law stated that 『the Crime of High Treason will be punished by summary execution to the third degree of kinship.』 Before rebelling just like

Georg, if they had severed their connections, then they wouldn't have involved the unrelated relatives, but the dishonest nobles had mostly been negligent in doing so. Perhaps, they never thought that they would lose..... But how incompetent of them. Furthermore, not only they commit treason, but they also had committed corruption, bribery, collusion with Amidonia, and misdeeds on their individual territories (abusing their authority and status to commit murder, rape, robbery, etc.), and in any case, they had completely violated the law. For people like Georg and Castor, whose only crime was treason, it is possible to at least deliver a clemency appeal for them, but on the contrary for the nobles, there are petitions to have them killed in a gruesome manner.

「A system of guilt by association, I guess that is to accuse the other relatives for not stopping the criminal? But isn't third degree of kinship is too much?」  
(Souma)

「That can't be helped. For humans and beastkin, being able to see the face of a great-grandchild already means a long life, but there are races that could see the face of their great-great grandchild and beyond that while still in active service. Because of this, the sentence scope was extended.」

「That's why, wouldn't too many unrelated people die? Even after Hakuya frantically ran around things, he was barely able to revise it to second degree of kinship. Furthermore, those under thirteen years are exempted from the execution sentence and would be given to an orphanage or into the church's custody.」

Those under the age of ten will be in the care of a state managed orphanage, those aged eleven to thirteen will be entrusted to the church. The difference between both of those are whether or not they could marry and create a family in the future. For those that entered an orphanage, this is possible, but not so for those who entered the church, as they will need to detach themselves from the secular world. Furthermore, if there are pregnant women or women that are not yet one month from her childbirth, they, too would be entrusted to be watched by the church. If in the future, they conspire for a crime, then at that



time, they will be “dealt with” ..... Currently, I am only able to do this much.

「I am..... against this guilt by association system. Only the people who committed the crime who should be judged. Even if they are the criminal's relatives, it is surely a mistake to put innocent people to death. In addition, I also feel the same for public execution. The death penalty, as a verdict for a heinous crime, will lose its deterrence value. That's why, I don't want to turn such a death penalty into a public spectacle and want to quickly reform the citizens' minds who thought of the death penalty as a show.」(Souma)

「It is already your country. You can do whatever you like with it.」(Georg)

「.....Then I shall do so.」(Souma)

「.....Your Majesty, is it painful to rob people's life?」(Georg)

Was I making quite a bitter expression on my face? Georg spoke out as if he noticed it.

「Of course there is no way that it is not painful. Just by one decree, numerous lives could be snuffed out. I am crushed by this sense of responsibility. Just half a year ago I was still a commoner, you know.」

「I have heard about this from Princess' letter. Yet, the Princess gave high praises to Your Majesty as a King amongst Kings. She wants to devote her body and soul to support you.」

「Liscia..... has frequently supported me. However, I must make a decision that will make her really sad. I must have you..... die.」

I put my hand on my forehead and let out a groan.

「Your plan is splendid. I have heard about it from Hal's dad..... Glaive. To gather all the dishonest nobles into one place, even their hidden assets, and

catch them in one go. Even those that were missed by Hakuya and I, a plan that doesn't leave much to desire. However..... since we couldn't release this information officially, your treatment, will be the same as the dishonest nobles.」

There are two reasons why I couldn't make an official statement about this. The first reason is that there were casualties in the battle between the Royal Army and the Kingdom Army. Unlike the battle at the Crimson Dragon Castle-Town, where the only casualties on Royal Army side was just one battleship, at the battle on Randell's outskirts, there were quite a few victims that had fallen on both sides. Although, it could be said that Georg had deliberately incited the battle for this country's sake, surely the families of the victims wouldn't agree with this.

The second reason, is that Zem, which was paying the ransom for the captured mercenaries would have its sentiments towards Elfrieden deteriorate even more. At the present stage, Zem would regret dispatching their mercenaries to the losing side as the revenge for our discontinuation of the Zemish mercenary contract. However, if they know the secret connection between Georg and me, then Zem would have thought that they had been set up by the Kingdom (although, it was Georg's own arbitrary actions). Their national sentiment towards the Kingdom, that was already bad, will become even more worse. This is a situation that I want to avoid.

That is why we arrived at this situation, I couldn't make an official statement about Georg's plan. But then, Georg had already been aware of this since the beginning. But he decided to purposely take this literally to the grave. An obstinate person. Really..... a foolish one.

「Hey, are there no other ways besides this? Is this your wish? To suffer even infamy, have a double suicide with the dishonest nobles, are you satisfied by this!?」(Souma)

I stood up and banged at the cell's bars.

「Why do you need to rush things!? It will take time, but there are surely other ways to bring the dishonest nobles to justice! The same with what happened to Castor! Isn't his rebellion because of your fault pushing your plan rashly! Even though there are jobs I want you to do in the post war times, but that plan has already been thrown out of order now, right? ..... Well, settling everything with just one action is too ambitious. If this country's openness had become relatively better, my and Hakuya's plan would proceed easily. Because of that, there is no meaning for losing you! Don't you know that for a country, losing a talented person is a terrible blow! It is not an equal value to the dishonest nobles!」  
(Souma)

「.....」(Georg)

I asked Georg who had silently closed his eyes. I once again struck the cell's bars.

「Answer me! You. Are you really satisfied by this!?」(Souma)

「.....Of course.」(Georg)

Georg made his reply with a calm expression.

「I believe that I am similar to a large tree, and after my death, new sprouts would grow from my roots. Then, my only wish is for that sprouts to grow healthily.」(Georg)

「.....For that reason, must the great tree also need to be struck down?」  
(Souma)

「It is my cherished dream. I feel joy to sense that the next generation will have

a robust growth. Your Majesty will also eventually understand.」(Georg)

「..... Will I?」(Souma)

「When the Princess gives birth to a child, then certainly you will.」(Georg)

I slammed myself into the chair. I was wrapped by an unusual ennui as I asked another thing that I had been concerned with.

「Hey..... Was everything “thought up by yourself”?」(Souma)

「..... What does that mean?」(Georg)

Georg opened his eyes and asked me back. Don't suddenly play senile!

「This is our first meeting. Even so, you have a strangely high evaluation of me. You have entrusted the current plan to me, you have entrusted Liscia, who is like a precious daughter for you, to me, and you have entrusted the Kingdom's future to me. No matter how much I thought about this, this is strange. Where does that faith come from?」(Souma)

「..... I knew of your extraordinary talent from the Princess' letters, do you have any dissatisfaction with this answer?」(Georg)

「Yeah, I am dissatisfied. Could you harbor faith on letters? If we are talking about your self-sacrifice, then there is only “for Elfrieden's Royalty's” sake, isn't this true?」(Souma)

Now that I thought about it, it had been strange “since the beginning.” Since the beginning, strangely the road that I needed to take had been prepared. Suddenly handing the crown to me, easily obtaining political power, pairing me with Liscia as her fiancée to grant me a just cause, and bringing the dishonest nobles to justice before I knew it. To think back upon it, I felt that the noob me had moved too easily. Perhaps, this was someone's intentions..... If someone

could do this, then there no one else but “that person.”

「Is the current plan that person’s order?」(Souma)

「.....I will keep silent about this.」(Georg)

「Please answer it. That person, you, what in the world is it that the both of you know?」(Souma)

「.....」(Georg)

I waited for Georg’s words, but he didn’t reply back. We were facing each other in silence for a short while. Only the soundless ringing inside the prison reached my ears.[3] ..... This is enough, it would be futile, no matter how much I waited.

「So you... can’t give the answer.」(Souma)

「..... If the time for that eventually comes, that person will speak to you.」  
(Georg)

I stood up, took out a small bottle from my pocket, and placed it in front of Georg.

「Your Majesty, this is?」(Georg)

「.....Poisoned wine. It will be done in this way, since I can’t bring myself to let a man that has sacrificed himself for his country to be executed in front of the public. Also..... I have recommended this method to the people who are trying to sacrifice themselves for you.」(Souma)

Perhaps it was because of Georg’s personality, that there was not a small amount of officers and soldiers from the Army who did this. Starting from the

former second of command, Beowulf, to several high ranked army officers, all had requested to be punished with the same sentence as Georg. Also, among the Army and the Air Force soldiers who didn't get pardoned with the services they had done in the war against Amidonia, there were people who were being imprisoned from trying to commit suicide in front of the Royal Castle to demand a life clemency for their general. Really..... These death-seeker fellows.

Georg received the small bottle, said 「My gratitude」, and relaxed his cheek. His stern lion face began to look like that of a good natured old man. Georg opened the lid of the small bottle and then lifted it towards me.

「Your Majesty. I will entrust the Princess to your hands.」(Georg)

「I can't make any definite promises..... but I am Liscia's fiancée. She is someone who will soon become my family. 『No matter what happens, protect the family.』..... This is the sole belief that I would never discard even if I have to disregard my realist thinking.」(Souma)

Because I knew how lonely it was being alone after losing a family, I would never concede over this belief. Even if it would be inefficient for doing so. Perhaps, because Georg felt my resolution, he nodded in satisfaction.

「I feel relieved to hear that reply. I will pray for Elfrieden Kingdom's glory, and Your Majesty and the Princess's happiness from underneath the shadow of the grass. Farewell..... Excuse me.」(Georg)

After saying these words, Georg drank the contents of that small bottle in one gulp. His body shook violently before he leaned forward, the empty small bottle fell from his hand to the floor and broke with a clang. At the next moment, there a thudding sound, and with that over, silence once again visited the prison. Georg's face that fell sideways..... showed a satisfied smile. I stood up, turned

my back at the cell and walked away.

Step, step.....

After several steps, I stopped for a moment, and turned my head back once more.

「You idiot..... Don't just burden me like this.」(Souma)

I walked again. This time I didn't turn back.



The next day, Chris Tachyon's News Program informed the public the news that 『Former Kingdom Army Supreme General Georg Carmine, has committed suicide in the jail.』

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Author note:

Thank you for keep reading this.

Georg's way of life's image song[4] will not of 「A Lion Standing in the Wind」[5], but the second part of the lyric from 「When the Dream Blows」[6]. If you know both of this, then you are quite a nerd.[7]

*and some part about giving reaction and comment after reading this and next story that I don't feel want to translate...*

[1] Like this:



[2] “Tsuru Sen-nen, Kame Man-nen” (For the Crane one thousand years, the Tortoise ten thousand years) is an old Japanese saying describing the symbols of youth and old age (long life), the Tsuru (crane) and Kame (tortoise). This is based on the motif of Japanese mystical or holy creatures (including dragons and tigers).

In Japan, the tsuru is a sacred bird that is said to live 1,000 years. This is why you make 1000 folded paper (origami) cranes, one for each year, as a prayer for good luck, safety or longevity.

The kame (turtle synonymous with tortoise) is said to live 10,000 years and is one of the four celestial guardians (dragon, phoenix, tiger and turtle) of Chinese mythology.

[3] You know, the sound that ring in your ears even when there are no other sounds. Actually, some kind of tinnitus since we are hearing our own bodily process.

Read this article, it's enlightening:



<https://www.wired.com/2015/05/big-question-can-silence-make-hear-things-arent/>

and now you learn something new from reading web novel.

[4] Anime watcher will know that Japanese characters always have a song that describe themselves/personality, hence the name “image song”.

[5] 風に立つライオン Kaze ni Tatsu Lion. A Japanese 1987 song.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1d7jsVnKpWc>

[6] 夢の吹く頃 Yume no Fukukoro. A Japanese 1989 song.  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KyTT7Bw0S-8>

The lyric of the second part of this song that become the reference of Georg’s words:

時代を越えて生き続けて = I have living crossing my ages (lifespan)

今枯れかけた 大きな樹 = A big tree that started to wither (die)

けれども その枝さきで = However, that branch tip

今年の若葉が生まれてる = Gave birth new leaves this year

[7] Not really, Google is my friend author-san.

# Chapter 05 – As a Ruler A - Reward

「.....」

「.....」

It was the morning after a whole week (eight days) since our return to Capital Parnam. Inside the government affairs office at Parnam Castle, the only sounds that could be heard was those of me moving the pen and Liscia presenting the documents.



I had worked in the Dukedom Capital Van, but this workload, ever since my return to Parnam, wasn't that much different either..... Not at all, or rather, it had multiplied. Since the system of the Three Dukes had been dismantled, I need to reform the military immediately. Then, in order to have an equal relationship with the Empire, I need to expand the military, so I can oppose the threat from the Demon Lord's Territory together with them..... so to speak, I have to『strengthen the military』[1]. And that “Strengthen the Military” plan is, for sure, the 『United Army Plan』 that I had declared during the Final Counsel with the Three Dukes.

Looking at humanity's history, a “strong soldier (in this case, it has the meaning of an army)” might be a mobile army corps. In short, whether or not we have the ability to send essential military forces to important positions quickly. [2] In practice, our complete victory in the battle against Amidonia was also because we were able to take up positions on the predicted battlefield earlier

than our enemy. Since we arrived earlier, we would have had plenty of rest and were able to battle with the totally exhausted enemy. If we had arrived at the same time instead, then our fatigue levels would be similar and although the Amidonian Army's numbers were a bit inferior, it would result in a battle with no retreat for them, so they would have held out considerably longer. If this happened, then the Kingdom Army would have surely had a harder fight.

Then, so that we are able to gain this mobility, together with the road improvements, I need to remove the fence between the Royal Army, the Kingdom Army, the Navy, and the Air Force; unite them under the same command; and create a structure that is able to move the whole army immediately. This is the 『United Army Plan』. The Royal Army with the Kingdom Army, Navy, and Air Force, together with the disassembled Nobles' Army, the Nobles' private soldiers attached to Royal Army, will be reorganized to create the 『Elfrieden Kingdom Defense Force』 (or EDF for short)[3]. Well, the abbreviation does give “that” sort of impression[4], but for the people of this world, my complex feelings about the name wouldn't be able to be transmitted to them. By the way, it seems that this world has giant ants.

Now, let's return to the previous topic. Of course there is a worry that by establishing the EDF, it could draw resistance from each army, but by conducting rebellions, the Kingdom Army and the Air Force have lost their voices, so there weren't any problem in this area anymore. Even so, since Glaive and Tormann, the people that I entrusted to take charge for both of their armies were also cooperating in this endeavor. Then, the Navy, that made no mistakes for choosing our side, also wouldn't resist too much, since I decided to appoint the Navy Admiral, Excel, as the EDF's Commander in Chief[5] (the person herself dislikes to be put in such a high position, but since I said to her that it was only until Ludwin gains enough experience, she reluctantly accepted it).

The troublesome one was the Nobles' Army. They are attached to the Royal Army, but the right to command them rested on the Nobles' side, a very

troublesome army corps to handle. In this world where dangerous wild creatures, monsters (although before the Demon Lord Army appeared, they only existed inside dungeons), bandits, pirates, and brigands exist, it was necessary for each territory to gather some forces to police the land. That's why, the nobles, who held territories, trained a private army that have the duty of guarding the safety of the territory. It was just that, at this present point in time in this country, that their numbers were too excessive.

This was the influence of the territorial expansion focus of the King from two generations ago. At that time, obtaining military exploits in the battlefield was the shortest and quickest way to fame, so the Nobles even conscripted their fiefs' population to assemble private armies. Military power would increase even if it was through conscripting amateurs, but won't it have zero meaning if the productivity falls down as a result.....? Eventually, even though the previous ruler, King Albert, shifted away from the expansion focus, the enlarged Nobles' Army had been left as it was.

That is why, right now, I am working to break up the Nobles' Army, leaving only the minimum number sufficient enough to police the territory. For the people who were conscripted, although they have occupations, they will be released and receive a severance payment upon discharge. For the people who showed any interest in joining the EDF, then if they show good promise by passing the exams then they would be enlisted. After that, I will work to appoint talented people to suitable positions (the personnel composition had been decided by the military authorities of Excel, Glaive and Ludwin, my job was just looking at the plans they made and giving my seal of approval).



「.....」

「.....」

During the work, Liscia and I didn't exchange even one word.

What an unpleasant situation..... No, this unpleasantness might only be felt by me one-sidedly. Liscia was behaving normally.

That day, even after I told her that Georg Carmine had committed suicide inside the prison, Liscia didn't make any changes in her expression. While being expressionless, she only muttered a tiny 「I see.....」.

It didn't mean that I expected her to lose her composure. It also didn't mean that I expected her to blame me either. My relationship with her is not that shallow to the extent where I don't know that she isn't that kind of person. However, I never expected that she would still behave normally even until now. I thought that at least her expression would become gloomy to some degree. Not only did she not feel any anguish or any sadness, Liscia was acting as if nothing ever happened. This put me at lost for words.

If it like this, then it will be better if she at least said even one complaint.....

『Why didn't you do anything to help Duke Carmine!』

.....Yeah. This hypothetical situation wasn't any better. Just imagining the scene of Liscia scorning me was depressing for me. Then, if she just hit me to finally wipe the slate clean..... But in this case, the one who should be worried will be me instead, right? Really..... What am I doing? I had boasted to Georg, 「No matter what happens, I will protect my family」, but in the first place I couldn't protect the girl closest to me.

「Souma.」(Liscia)

「Eh, ah, what is it?」(Souma)

I looked at the one who called me. It was Liscia, who slightly tilted her head.

「Your pen stopped.」(Liscia)

「.....Ah, sorry.」(Souma)

Not good..... I need to pull myself together. I once again returned to my work. Let's finish the things in front of me right now. Perhaps, one day, time will fix this. While thinking like this and working, someone knocked on the door. 「Come in」 I called out to the door, 「Excuse me」, Serina-san the grand chambermaid entered.

「I came to inform Your Majesty that the preparations have been finished.」  
(Serina)

「I understand.」(Souma)

After stopping our work, I put on the kingly mantle and then we headed to the audience room together.

This day was the Commendation Day for the people that had performed distinguished services in the war against Amidonia.



「Glaive Magna. I commend you for your loyalty and the great deeds that we have been indebted to. To reward that loyalty, I confer to you the territory of

Randell and its surroundings.」(Souma)

「Yes, Your Majesty. I am grateful for this blessing.」(Glaive)

「Yes. This is just temporary, but I bestow to you a part of Former Supreme Army General Georg's authority to you. Until the time comes for the Elfrieden Defense Force's reorganization, please adeptly unite the Kingdom Army.」  
(Souma)

「Yes, Your Majesty. These old bones will certainly strive to meet Your Majesty's expectations.」(Glaive)

In front of me, who stood out from the throne and granted an award with a pompous tone, was Hal's father, Glaive, prostrating himself. Since it's not being deliberately broadcasted, I actually disliked this formal ambience. However, since the State Secretary was recording my each and every word and action, I needed to act "Kingly" like this. So that the people in the future wouldn't belittle me when they read the historical records, that was what my retainer, Marcus, had been telling me repeatedly. Honestly, I don't really care about the posthumous evaluation.



In the battle with the Amidonia Dukedom, Elfrieden Kingdom didn't obtain any territory, but the Kingdom succeed in obtaining a large sum of indemnity money. Furthermore, the Kingdom collected ransom money from Zem for the captured mercenaries, and seized the territory and the assets from the dishonest nobles. The dissolution of the Carmine Duchy and Vargas Duchy had also been decided upon. Compared with the profits from the war, the reward received by the soldiers was considerably small. It was because most of the mobilized soldiers in the war came from the Kingdom Army and the Air Force. Since they had been incriminated with allegations of rebellion, this war was a battle for them to clear this incrimination, so there was no talk about any other rewards.

Also, the Nobles' Army attached to the Royal Army, that was just waiting on the sideline during the Three Dukes campaign, and were mostly abstained from fighting in the war against Amidonia, so they also didn't receive any rewards. They had missed the chance to get in on this sweet tale, but this is reaping what they sow. So the ones who needed to be rewarded were only the Royal Army's Kings Guard and the Navy. The Nobles, who were of Knight peer or higher, that had joined both of the armies were bestowed with territories, but these territories came from the dishonest nobles or were created from the dissolution of the Carmine Duchy and the Vargas Duchy, so it was a good contrivance. Nobles lower than Knight peerage would receive a monetary bonus.

Then for today, those who had accomplished an outstanding achievement would be rewarded personally by me. The contents for those rewards were typically peerage or territory, but if they desired something other than these, then they could mention this directly to the King. If the King could accomplish it and appropriate with merit that they had obtained, then the King might grant it. They even could ask for money or rare items possessed by the Royal Family. In the past, by using this arrangement, a knight requested the hand of the Princess he loved, or a person would make a direct appeal to expose a vice noble. Since this was a situation where any kind of request might come out, it was decided to not to make any broadcast using the Royal Voice Broadcast Orb.[6]

Then, these were the people who will receive the commendations this time. The one who switched sides from the Kingdom Army and led it in the war against Amidonia, Glaive Magna. The Lord of Altomura who had delayed the Amidonian Army, Wyst Garrow. Similarly, the Commander of the Marine who delayed the Amidonian Army in the Goldoa[7] Valley, Juna Doma. Lastly, the one who led the reinforcements to the battle at Randell's outskirts, the Chief of the Dark Elves of the God-Protected Forest, Wodan Utgard[8] (Aisha's father). Actually, the one with the most meritorious deeds should be the Navy Admiral, Excel Walter, but at the present situation, she had "already used up" that merit, so she won't received anymore rewards.



Moreover, before giving the rewards for the aforementioned five people, Aisha, who had been protecting me as an “uninvited bodyguard” until now, was bestowed with the newly created position of 『Dame of the East Wind (東風 Kochi)』[9]. The difference between this position and the previous one was that previously, she was treated just as a mercenary that was employed out of my own pocket money, but from now, on she would be treated like a Knight that will receive wages from the country. By the way, the origin of this 『Dame of the East Wind (東風 Kochi)』 was from imitating the nickname of Xu Chu, the leader of Cao Cao’s elite bodyguards[10], which is 『Foolish Tiger (虎痴 Kochi)』[11]. Since the origin of this name was because he was 『a fool who was as strong as a tiger』, I change the letters into 『East Wind (東風 Kochi)』. The meaning was that, when I called “East Wind” (東風 Kochi)..... She would come this way (こち Kochi).[12]

When I congratulated Aisha, who had been appointed as Dame of the East Wind, by granting her with an 【Impregnable Gauntlet】(A gauntlet that had been enchanted with physical and magical damage resistance effects, from the castle’s treasure warehouse. Although, originally it was going to be a shield that suited her position’s image, however, since Aisha uses a Great Sword, it was replaced with this gauntlet), she held it tightly to her chest while speaking in tears and fumbling her words,

『Hiks..... Your Majesty..... for me..... t-thank you very mach! So that I can keep protecting Your Majesty’s safety, please put me beside Your Magestiiii.....!』

No, I know that she is happy..... But isn’t that too... you know, over...? After seeing her behave like this, the other people in the room made wry smiles.



「Wyst. We are grateful for the great deeds you have done in your duty to induce Amidonia. As the Lord of Altomura, from hereafter, be diligent to keep the peace of the realm.」(Souma)

「Yes Your Majesty. I am still lacking, but I will strive to serve the duties I receive.」(Wyst)

I finished bestowing the rewards for Wyst, who came after Glaive. Wyst will receive the southern territory from the former Carmine Duchy. Since his original territory was already a very fertile agricultural region, combined with the new territory, he suddenly sprung up into a very influential noble. In the last war, he had to endure the disgrace of playing as a small fry in front of Gaius and Julius. I must reward this deed.

Then, the next person would be the one who dispatched the dark elves reinforcement to the battle at Randell's outskirt, Aisha's father, Wodan Utgard. This reinforcement was not something that was even predicted by Hakuya or me. I knew the battle prowess that the dark elves had, but they should have been busy with the reconstruction from the landslide, and in the first place, they didn't have any desire to meddle with events that happened outside of their forest, so I thought that it would be futile to request for their cooperation.

However, contradicting our predictions, Wodan-san's group arrived at the battlefield as reinforcements for our side. I had heard from Hal, that the dishonest nobles took out the cannon without permission and wantonly fired it, so this reinforcement was really an fortunate miscalculation. I met halfway with Wodan and shook hands with him to show him my gratitude.

「I am very grateful. Even while being in a dire times yourself, you had admirably come as reinforcements for us.」(Souma)

「How could it be. We, the Dark Elves tribe, couldn't just not repay our debt of favor. During those times of calamity, when Your Majesty had personally led the relief party, we had been reminded of the connection we had with the outside world.」(Wodan)

「It is such joyful news. It is as if I once again felt the origin of this country's founding day when various races united their hands together. If you have something that you desire, by all means, please tell me.」(Souma)

When I said these words, Wodan-san tilted his head.

「We had already received such favors that we could never able to repay. Not only had we received so many aid materials for the reconstruction, but you also gave plenty of rewards for each soldiers who took part in the war. There is nothing new that I have to wish for.」(Wodan)

「Please do not be so reserved. Didn't the decision to send the reinforcements lie solely on your side? If you desire it so, we could plant trees on the outskirts of the God-Protected Forest and increase the size of the forest.」(Souma)

「I am happy to hear it, however, the current size of the God-Protected Forest is already sufficient for us.」(Wodan)

Fumu..... How troubling. I want to show my gratitude to Wodan. However, even though I had presented other forms of reward, Wodan-san firmly refused it.

「.....Are you really certain that you do not have any wishes?」(Souma)

「.....In that case, I have one wish from Your Majesty.」(Wodan)

「What is it? If I can do it, then I will grant it.」(Souma)

「I deeply appreciate it, Your Majesty. Then, please, can you take my daughter, Aisha's hand?」

「Father!?(Aisha)」

Aisha who had been standing behind the throne, made a disarrayed yell.

「My daughter doesn't have any interest in things other than martial arts, but it looks like she has finally reached her blossoming age. Besides, there should be changes in how she yearn for Your Majesty. So please, could you take her hand as your wife.」(Wodan)

「Wodan-dono's title is that of the chief of the village inside the God-Protected Forest, however in practicality speaking, he can be thought of as a noble with a territory of the God-Protected Forest. Regarding your daughter Aisha-dono, she could be accepted as 『The Second Queen Consort』.」(Marcus)

Marcus quickly made this complementing remark. Today, instead of Prime Minister Hakuya, who was away on other businesses, Marcus was the one who presided for this occasion. This had been mentioned before[13], but in this country, Queens (that is, a King's wife), are mostly divided into Queen Consorts and Royal Consorts[14], and it is possible to have several of them at the same time. Although this country originally had only one Queen Consort, with the rest of the wives being Royal Consorts and numerous Mistresses that held no real authority. However, the Elfrieden King from several generations ago said, 「I don't want a hierarchy amongst the ones I love.」So because of that, the Royal Consorts up to that time were elevated into Queen Consorts (the original Queen Consort become 『The First Queen Consort』, the rest will be just addressed as 『The Second 』, 『*The Third* 』), while the mistresses were elevated into Royal Consorts, which was practiced up to this day.

For that reason, to become a Queen Consort, one needs to come from a family with a noble rank higher than Knight and the children of a Queen Consort could inherit the crown. The order for the succession is not based on the order which they were born of, but was in order starting from the children born from the

First Queen Consort (if there is a large age difference between the children, then it could be adjusted by changing the order of the Queen Consorts). On the other hand, a Royal Consort could hail from any social status (even serfs or slaves), but their children wouldn't have any rights for throne succession. However, since they are still royalty, the Nobles or Knights that want to tie relationships with the royalty would desire them to become their in-laws, certainly the Royal Consort children will gain money or status from the marriages.

(So, Aisha will become the Second Queen Consort, huh?)

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[1] For those who forget, Souma's political promise to his Elfrieden constituent is basically: Fukoku kyouhei (富国強兵, "Enrich the state, strengthen the military") which was also a national slogan used by Meiji Japan. Just like it sounds, Souma had more or less “富国 Enrich the state”, his program of Food Diversification, Trade Promotion due to Road Network Building, Distribution of Wealth (from the dishonest nobles), and Increased National Budget (due to Amidonia's Reparation Payment and Empire's Donation Annulment) had more or less revitalized Elfrieden's economy. Now, what he will do is 強兵, strengthen the military... Yeah, I know people are just dying to read this one...

[2] In other words: a Rapid Deployment Force, like the USA with its Marine Expeditionary Force, Airborne Corps and US Army Rangers and Russia with its VDV. The key of this is their capability of quick deployment even outside of their country's borders.

[3] Originally Souma mentioned エルフリーデン王国防衛軍 (Erufuriiden Oukoku Boueigun) which he shortened as 国防軍 (Kokubougun : (National) Defense Force, for example: イスラエル国防軍 is Israel Defense Force), and he also mentioned that in English, the name will be エルフリーデン・ディフェンス・フォース. (Erufuriiden Difensu Foosu) And you know that I can't translate what was already in Katakana English into English right? So I changed this paragraph. Since it was the Elfrieden Defense Force, I shortened it as EDF, now if there any 国防軍 appeared in the story after this, I will translate it as EDF. After all, it will be

important in the next reference.

[4] EDF = Earth Defense Force, a game where you battle giant ant-like Aliens

[5] Or Generalissimo.

[6] Since I like making footnote.

For those interested, the word used to refer the Broadcast Orb is: 玉音放送

Literally it is composed of 玉: ball/orb 音= voice 放送 = broadcast. So it can be translated as: old plain Sound/Voice Broadcast Orb.

But 玉音 also figuratively means: Emperor's voice or Jewel Voice. (since 玉 can also mean Jewel and the Emperor's voice is likened to a Jewel). So it can also be translated as Royal Voice Broadcast (Orb/Systems) (I choose the later meaning, since story-wise, these orbs were only used by rulers).

Now 玉音放送 also could refer to the radio broadcast in which Japanese Emperor Hirohito read out the Imperial Rescript on the Termination of the War announcing to the Japanese people that the Japanese Government had accepted the Potsdam Declaration demanding the unconditional surrender of the Japanese military at the end of World War II. The speech was probably the first time that an Emperor of Japan had spoken (albeit via a phonograph record) to the common people. See the similarity of the orbs that is used by the rulers in the story to address their citizen?

The author used the multiple meaning of 玉音放送 to refer to the broadcast orbs.

[7] Funfact: ゴルドアー (Gorudoa) can also be interpreted as: Gold Door.

[8] I know that I previously translated his name as Boden. But Wodan sounds more badass... My bad... FYI, Wodan is the Germanic name for Odin.

[9] This is a massive untranslatable pun. 東風侍 could be read as Kochiji, or ことしじ. The pun will be explained by Souma in the subsequent paragraphs. 侍 Ji (a person serving under another) is also the word used to write Samurai and used in compound word like 侍従 (Jiju) : Chamberlain, 侍女 (Jijo) : Maid. So I choose Dame here...

[10] Don't know Xu Chu and Cao Cao? Either read Romance of the Three

Kingdom or play Dynasty Warriors.

[11] 虎痴 Hu Chi (Japanese “Kochi”), which has been translated as Marquis Tiger, Crazy Tiger, Mad Tiger, and other variations. He also appears once in the Brewitt-Taylor translation by the nickname Tiger Lust.

[12] To put it short... Souma is using “Come here” as a joke... Perhaps the joke in English will be, Souma bestowed Aisha “Dame Cumhear” when Souma call Aisha, he will say, “Dame, Come Here.” ... Okay... A bad joke... I am not a native English speaker after all. (E/N: That.....sounds so wrong. Maybe “Lady C’Mere” instead? Seriously, you used the wrong replacement for “come” orz.) Yeah well, it’s really hard to translate a pun properly...

[13] See Arc 2, Chapter 8.

[14] Or Senior Queen and Junior Queen or True Queen and Side Queen.

## Chapter 05 – As a Ruler B - Bethrotal

Author Note: Souma is likely the type that won't cross the line unless he gets kicked flying.(In regards to female relationships)

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But.... to make Aisha the 2nd Queen Consort, you say.

「Would that be a reward to you, Wodan?」(Souma)

「As a father, I honestly feel complicated..... But since she also seems to desire that as well, the desire to grant her wish is also parental love. Also, at this period in time where the people of the God-Protected Forest finally started to face the world outside, I believe it will hold a huge significance for the chief's daughter to marry into royalty. Not just the bond between the God-Protected Forest and royalty, it would also become the symbol of the bond between Humans and Dark Elves.」(Wodan)

Not just for the sake of his daughter, but also for political considerations, I see. For our side as well, if we could strengthen the ties with the God-Protected Forest, I would be able to include the elite archers from the Dark Elves that had shown their prowess in the battle at the outskirts of Randell.....and, well even if we left this benefit aside.....

Aisha is cute. If you asked me whether or not I wanted to marry her, the answer will be "I would like to". Though I do feel that her loyalty to me is too much, but this means that her good will is also conveyed straight to me (although I feel as though I am feeding her). Her ability as a queen is doubtful,



but she has enough valor to compensate for that. She is a girl that can give my heart a relief if she could stay by my side as my wife.

But, you know..... When I turned back at the throne, I could see Liscia who was standing next to me. Even for my relationship with Liscia, until now, I have been dodging the issue of her being my fiancée (temporary). During the war with Amidonia last time, I revised my thinking after I realized that I was conducting myself like a king when I was conversing with Carla. When I realized that I had already reached the point of no return, I decided to stop brushing off the matter of my relationship with Liscia.

Nonetheless, I am still a little conflicted in regards to having multiple wives. Though Marcus, Liscia and Juna-san, had repeatedly said that this is normal, for someone who is strongly influenced by the ethics of modern Japan, I can't easily accept it..... Ah, it's not like I am thinking about something arrogant like loving multiple women is insincere or something like that. Giving an immediate reply at this place would only make me feel bad towards Liscia. It's like a man who is going to two-timing after all.

As I was thinking about that, Liscia looked at me. Then, seeing that I was trying not to show how flustered I was, Liscia said as if slightly astonished.

「Please make sure you properly take Aisha as your wife, got it?」(Liscia)

「You say properly.....Are you fine with it, Liscia? 」(Souma)

「I don't have any right to forbid it, but didn't I already say that if it's Aisha and the rest, then I am fine with it? Or rather, it will become more troublesome if you don't marry them after all.」(Liscia)

「Troublesome?」(Souma)

「Souma, you are a king, you know. At any rate, from now on, there will be a situation where you have to marry the daughters of nobles or the princesses of other countries. For the sake of that situation, I wish to fill the higher ranking consorts with people who we can trust.」

Liscia, who emphasized the practical side of this arrangement, gave out a sigh, and looked at me who was still hesitating.

「Even though Souma can make firm decisions that control the fate of the country, but when it comes to female relationships, you are so indecisive, aren't you?」(Liscia)

「Ugu.....」(Souma)

「Good grief.... Aisha!」(Souma)

「Y, Yes!」(Aisha)

Being called out suddenly, diagonally at my back in her guard position, Aisha, who was keep on edge and watching the event to see how it progressed, jumped with a startle. Liscia pointed her finger at her with a snap.

「I do not plan on handing over the position of the First Queen Consort. Is being the Second Queen Consort fine for you? If you are fine with it, I won't say anything or rather, I will welcome you.」(Liscia)

「Y...Yes! If I can be at the side of his Majesty!」(Aisha)

Liscia nodded at Aisha's reply and then spoke to me while looking straight into my eyes.

「I have set the table. That's why.... Do it.... properly.」(Liscia)

「.....Got it.」(Souma)

I wonder why. At this time, I feel like I have already seen the power balance of the future. Liscia has already shown this much "Woman's Spirit" .... So, as

expected, I can't show any more of my unsightliness. I walked towards Aisha and stopped near her. That strong Aisha was now showing a uneasy expression. Ah... seriously, don't make such a face.

「Aisha.」(Souma)

「Y, Yes!」(Aisha)

「So..... would you become my bride?」(Souma)

「U! Yes! With pleasure!」(Aisha)

I swallowed the retort of 「Is this a bar?」[1]. While I was feeling like my face was burning, I turned to face Wodan and spoke to him, who was standing there smiling while leaking out his complicated feelings as a father. I spoke not in a tone of a King, but as someone who was addressing a person above him.

「....So the situation has reached this point. I shall come forth to give my official greeting. Father-in-law.」(Souma)

「....I shall be waiting. Son-in-law.」(Wodan)

Thus, Aisha became my second fiancée.

But, now that it has turned out this way, what should I do with the 『Dame of the East Wind』 title. As expected, I don't think I can make the Queen act like an exclusive SP[2]. When I mentioned this to Aisha,

「Leave it to me, your Majesty! Even when I have become your Majesty's wife, I shall protect your Majesty's life!」(Aisha)

Was what she said with a full-faced smile, so we decided to leave it as it is..... Well, I guess I can just appoint some subordinates under her later. Now that the

Second Queen Consort candidacy had been decided, Marcus made a relieved expression as one of his worries had finally decreased (he had been worrying about the danger of the currently low number of members of Royalty due to the previous succession struggle, he has been saying 「Increase the number of the wives, make children」 at every opportunity), and although it ended up in the form of having new worries dropping in, I could only show my condolences.

Towards this situation we were in, Juna-san showed a slightly lonesome smile.



Although I was met with various difficulties, Wodan's reward session ended, and finally it was Juna-san's turn.

As I was speaking words of gratitude, I asked her, 「Do you have anything you wish for?」.... Well, even if I didn't ask her, I already knew her answer. Most likely, she would make a petition that she wished to hand over all of her merits to Excel. This time, she moved not as a Lorelei, but as a member of the Navy.

「Your Majesty, my merit.....」(Juna)

「May I speak a few words?」(Excel)

Excel began to speak and interrupted Juna's words.

「Please forgive me for my sudden impoliteness. However, please grant me the permission to speak.」(Excel)

「..... Granted.」(Souma)

「Thank you very much.」(Excel)

Excel bowed and slowly began to speak.

「As Your Majesty should know, Juna Doma is my granddaughter. But Juna's father, who is my son, had married into the merchant family of Doma, which conducts business in our Lagoon City. In other words, Juna Doma was born as a commoner. Though through her military service, she is working under me, she doesn't have any connections to a "noble family's" circumstances.」(Excel)

「... What do you wish to say?」(Souma)

Although I asked that, Excel instead faced Juna-san and said to her,

「Although you might have planned to use your merits for my sake, that is not necessary.」(Excel)

「Esteemed Grandmother[3]!? However, 」(Juna)

Juna tried to argue vehemently, so Excel silently shook her head

「It is fine. You are a person who does not have connections with the Vargas family. It is not good to use your merits for someone you have not met before. Please use it for your own sake.」(Excel)

「Esteemed Grandmother!?」(Juna)

「I cannot sacrifice the happiness of my granddaughter for the sake of my son-in-law and my other granddaughter. It is fine, so you do not need to worry about us. You should go ahead and have your wish granted.」

Having Excel looking at her with such gentle eyes, Juna cast her eyes downward, she seemed to be conflicted for a moment. But, soon after, she

opened her eyes, took a step forward and kneeled.[4]

「Your Majesty. I have a request.」(Juna)

「.....What is it?」(Souma)

「If possible, I also.....wish to stay and sing by Your Majesty's side from now on.」(Juna)

This means.... no need to guess, to take Juna-san.... as my wife as well.

「Your Majesty, in Juna Doma-dono's case, we can accept her as a Royal Consort. If you wish to receive her as a Queen Consort, then it is necessary for her to be adopted at some point by a Noble House of Knight rank or higher.」  
(Marcus)

Markus said that with a happy expression. Perhaps because the fact that the number of my wives were increasing was just as he desired. When I looked at Liscia, she gave a nod as if saying, 「Agree」. But....

「I am sorry. I cannot do so.....」(Souma)

I rejected it clearly. Liscia opened her eyes wide at my words, while Excel looked at me with imploring eyes as if asking「Why in the world.....」. Juna-san was looking downward, so I couldn't see her expression. A gloomy atmosphere started to envelop the room, but..... No no no, please listen to the end.

「.....For the time being..... It's not possible. Juna-san is the 『Prima Lorelei』 of 『Project Lorelei』, the Musical Program Broadcast plan that uses the Royal Broadcast Orb, you know. If we try to announce the engagement of the famous Juna-san then, a revolt will happen in the capital.」

And that will not be on a joking level either. It was still fresh in my memory that there was a request from the National Assembly to 『Put Juna-san more often on the Royal Broadcast』. An idol, who was revealed to have a lover, had her blog blazed, this was something that happened quite often in the previous world, but since there isn't any blog that is going to burn in this world, it's going to be either the『City』or the 『Castle』, I guess. Burning the country with flames of jealousy is not something I can laugh at. So,

「Would you be willing to wait for a while longer?」(Souma)

「!」(Juna)

Towards Juna-san who raised her head, I spoke these words while having an awkward feeling,

「Right now, I still need the ability of Juna-san as a 『Lorelei』. That's why I wish for you to stay as the 「Citizen's Juna-san」 for now. After we gather even more Loreleis and raise them into talents that can succeed the path, then I shall certainly go and receive you.」(Souma)

「.....I shall be waiting for that day. Your Majesty」(Juna)

Juna-san said this and revealed the smile of a young maiden.

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Author's note:

Thank you very much for reading it always.

With that, Aisha and Juna have become his fiancées.

To describe their relationship in a certain someone's ecstatic way of talking,[5]

【So-Li → Best Friends, Comrades and Lovers】

【So-Ai → Master and his faithful dog】[6]

【So-Juna → A brother trying to tiptoe[7] and an elder sister gently chiding him】

This is the kind of relationship I am trying to make people feel.

Ah, Tomoe-chan is a sister to the end.

[1] Aisha's answer is basically like: Aisha, do you want an oden? Yes, with Pleasure. So Souma is asking, is she treating him like a stall's food menu.

[2] The Security Police (セキュリティポリス Sekyuritii Porisu), also known as the Security Police Division (警備部警護課 Keibibu Keigoka), is the Japanese close protection unit mandated with the responsibility of protecting domestic and foreign VIPs on Japanese soil and abroad. Its officers are known to wear the SP insignia on their suit lapel, red neckties, and pocket handkerchiefs on their suits. Its structure has been greatly influenced by the United States Secret Service.

[3] It's interesting that Juna refer Excel as: 大母様 Ookaasama not "obaasan" or "sobo". With roughly means, Great Mother. Perhaps since Excel had many other children?

[4] You know, this kind of kneel: *insert kneeling picture I take without permission from the Internet*

[5] I don't know which person the author refer to. Possibly the typical Female Japanese Game-Show Host's way of talking.

[6] TL Yoshiro: Isn't that cruel? Yukkuri: Not really.....

[7] The figurative meaning of tiptoe or 背伸びしたい is "Someone who tries to do something beyond their ability" in this case a younger brother trying to woo an elder sister.



## Chapter 05 – As a Ruler AB (behind the scenes) – Meanwhile, The Black Clothed One[1]

On the day when Elfrieden Kingdom's (Temporary) King, Souma, accepted his Second and Third fiancées, there were two people conducting a discussion through the Royal Voice Broadcast at a different place. Elfrieden Kingdom's Prime Minister, Hakuya Kwonmin[2], addressed Jeanne Euphoria, the Sister Princess of Maria, the Empress of the Grand Chaos Empire, and who was reflected on the simple receiver set atop the table.

「The reception is clear. It seems there are no problems in the simple receiver sets' connection. Thank you very much, Jeanne-dono, to even send a Griffon Cavalry to us.」(Hakuya)

『My Sister[3] also understands the importance of what King Souma called a “Hotline”. If we establish this, then the Empire and the Kingdom can always communicate with each other. So shouldn't it be a natural thing that we did this in a hurry?』(Jeanne)

Jeanne made a sweet grin on the screen.

After the Amidonian Conference, Jeanne returned to her country and reported to Empress Maria about the proposals from Souma: 『The Secret Alliance with Elfrieden Kingdom』, 『Establishing a Bilateral Hotline』, 『Each country dispatching a residing Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary[4] and establishing an embassy as the place where the ambassadors will stay』. Jeanne had thought that Maria might not refuse these proposals and, sure enough, Maria readily consented to it. Or perhaps, it could be better to say that she was laughing exuberantly.

『That was the first time I had ever seen Sister laughing like that. She seems to be quite happy.』(Jeanne)

「Happy..... is it?」(Hakuya)

『To have someone who shares the same value system..... In other words, someone who has the same way of thinking. There are not many people who can do so in the Empire. Someone who can see eye to eye with the Holy Maiden.』(Jeanne)

「I see.」(Hakuya)

The one who pursued the ideal and the one who looked at the reality, not only were they separated geographically at the eastern and western sides of the Continent, but were also separated by their ideology, but for some reason, both of them could understand each other. Certainly, it might be an interesting situation, thought Hakuya.

『When it is possible, I want to immediately to hold a broadcast conversation between Sister and King Souma.』(Jeanne)

「Since both of them are really busy, both of them probably don't have time to do this. When the situation has calmed down, let us decide the time for the conversation beforehand.」(Hakuya)

『Yes. Certainly.』(Jeanne)

Then, after a bit gossip (expressing complaints about their respective Lords), Jeanne asked Hakuya.

『There is something that has been bothering me from awhile ago. I could see a lot of books behind Hakuya-dono and I have the feeling that I have seen those books before from somewhere.』(Jeanne)

「.....Ah, these books are loaned as a collateral for the indemnities payment from Van. Since there are many books that I want to copy before returning them, I was sorting them out until just now.」(Hakuya)

『The Prime Minister himself personally sorted the books?』(Jeanne)

「Of course, since we lack the manpower, but half of it is because it's my pastime. I have a fondness for sorting books. Dividing them according to the category, lining them uniformly, sometimes turning pages of a book that caught my eyes, and finally taking pleasure at the sight of the neat book arrangement on the shelves. Books are humanity's wisdom. The progress of the country itself. When I thought about how I could always read the books lined up on the shelves before me.....」(Hakuya)

『.....』(Jeanne)

Jeanne was opening her eyes wide in surprise at the sight of Hakuya's loquaciousness. If you were talking about the "Black Clothed Prime Minister"[5], then he was someone who was famous as a genius that Souma had discovered and a person who led Gaius VIII and Julius by their noses with his Machiavellianism[6]. When she personally met with him, Jeanne also had the impression that he was a really clever person. However, when Hakuya was talking about books, he had the eyes of a child. This gap[7] (Hakuya's attitude that was different from his usual demeanor) left Jeanne in a bit of shock.

『..... Do you really like books?』(Jeanne)

When he heard Jeanne ask this, Hakuya's ego returned. His expression recovered back into his usual cool and composed one, but the tips of his ears were a bit red.

「\*cough\*..... Excuse me for my conduct. I have a bit of weakness for books.....」(Hakuya)

『Fufu, I think I have seen an unexpected side of you.』(Jeanne)

「Is it unexpected? I myself think that I am more suited as a librarian rather than as a prime minister.」(Hakuya)

In the first place, Hakuya's audience with Souma, was just because his Father uncle said 『Don't just spend years reading books! Go out and help society!』 and involuntarily registered him at the Talent Event's 『Wisdom Talent』 class. Then, he, the overall champion, had an audience with the young king and was charmed by him. Hakuya thought that if it was Souma, then he could make this nearly dying country get back on its feet again.[8] So he stopped being a reclusive bookworm, became a government official, and before he noticed it, he had already become the Prime Minister.

As a matter of fact, at that time Hakuya thought that it would already be good enough if he became an advisor to the previous Prime Minister Marcus. However, that Marcus saw that Hakuya was more Prime Minister material than himself and recommended Hakuya as Prime Minister. Thanks to this, recently Hakuya didn't have any time to read the books that he liked and his days of being pressured by work, continued.

『Fumu..... Then, if I appointed you as the Chief Librarian of the Imperial Library, would you come to our country? I think that our library's book collection is also more superior than the Kingdom's.』(Jeanne)

「Ah. That is a quite fascinating offer.」(Hakuya)

『Is it no good?』(Jeanne)

「If it was before I entered into the government service, then I might have unhesitatingly jumped at that proposal.」(Hakuya)

But, you know..... These work pressured days are also not bad, thought Hakuya. The former Hakuya would think that history was only something that

existed inside a book. However, currently he felt that he was making history himself. By serving under Souma, who will lead the Era of this country, Hakuya himself could become a character in the history. When he thought about this, it didn't sound bad.

「Currently I want to be together with His Majesty Souma when he leads the Era. Then, at some point in the future, when the next generation has grown up, I will retire and write down this Era.」

『A comfortable retirement, right? ..... At this day and age, there might be no other lifestyle that is more comfortable than this.』

What Jeanne said might be true. In this Era, it is hard to have a comfortable retirement. Between the threat from the Demon Lord's Army from the north, which was gradually approaching, and an Alliance, which member countries had their own agenda, it was a hostility filled situation. Hakuya must settle these situations entirely for the sake of his comfortable retirement. Whether or not this is possible, it was something that was beyond his knowledge though.

『Well then, I will look forward to our next meeting, Hakuya-dono.』(Jeanne)

「Yes. Let us meet again, Jeanne-dono.」(Hakuya)

Jeanne ceased her communication. Fuu..... Hakuya let out a sigh and stood up. He reached out his hands towards the piled up Amidonian books. The precious books, that were neglected in Amidonia's care, had been damaged to such extent that they need mending. If Hakuya didn't take them into his "guardianship", then these books would disappear from the face of the world. Good grief...Exasperated, Hakuya picked up a book, and then.....

「Prime Minister-sama.」(MIB Agent)

In the corner of the room, there was a kneeling man clad in black attire. His face was shrouded by a veil of black cloth. It was as if he was melting into the darkness of the room, the light dimmed behind its closed doors. Hakuya asked that man.

「How did it go?」(Hakuya)

「It went well. However.....」(MIB Agent)

When the man hesitated to answer, Hakuya knitted his brow.

「Did something happen?」(Hakuya)

「This is..... I feel that in many ways, we have progressed too easily. It is as if, we were operating according to someone else's plan.....」(MIB Agent)

「Is that so.....」(Hakuya)

Hakuya dismissed the man and turned the pages of the book in his hand. Why did he take custody of the books from Amidonia's Library as the indemnities' collateral? It was because Hakuya was expecting something. That is, the chance of the neglected book collection containing books about Amidonia's family registry or legal jurisprudence[9]. Since the Capital's Library was usually supplied with copies of these kind of books, if he could obtain those book copies, then it will be as if he had grasped the heart of that country. Since the Amidonian Royalty was War-Hawkish, he had expected that they wouldn't recognize its importance. However, contrary to his expectations, amongst the confiscated books, there was only a single copy of that type.

That copy was what Hakuya was holding right now, a book about the current generation's Amidonian Royalty's genealogy. He turned the pages and when he arrived at the last page, there was a folded up paper interposed in it. Hakuya unfolded that pages and what he found was a picture of "a small animal with

black fur around the eyes and round ears, pulling its eyelid with one hand while sticking out its tongue[10]”.

Seeing this picture, Hakuya was blinking his eyes in surprise, while laughing, “kukuku”.

「I see. It seems that Amidonia isn't lacking a 'person' like I had thought.」  
(Hakuya)

[1] Once again, the author showed us his talent in using a Japanese word with multiple meanings. This is a rather hard word to translate. The original word is 黒衣 literally means : Black Clothes. But like many Japanese words, this word has multiple meanings:

A. As 'Kurogo': The stagehands in traditional Japanese theatre (Kabuki or Bunraku), who dress all in black. In kabuki, the kurogo serve many of the same purposes as running crew. They move scenery and props on stage, aiding in scene changes and costume changes. They will also often play the role of animals, will-o-the-wisps, or other roles which are played not by an actor in full costume, but by holding a prop. Kurogos wear all black, head to toe, in order to imply that they are invisible and not part of the action onstage. As this convention was extended to kabuki actors depicting stealthy ninja, the stereotypical image of a ninja dressed all in black might be derived from kabuki. In Bunraku, the people who played the dolls are also wore black clothes.

*insert Kabuki and Bunraku pictures*

This term could also be used as in a figurative way to refer to an 'unsung hero' (since stagehands are important yet they are not part of the story).

But it also could mean a doll-master (string-puller for Western equivalent), that is a person who does things without being 'seen' by the public, mostly involving a puppet front.

In this meaning: Hakuya is the 'stagehand' who is not 'visible' to the 'public'

yet was the one who moves things around. The stagehand for Souma in the stage.

B. As ‘Kokui’: The black clothes that are worn by Buddhist Priest. In Japanese History, some Buddhist Priests that held a lot of secular world influence (politically) are also called: 黒衣の宰相 (literal meaning: Black Clothed Prime Minister), which, intentionally, also is Hakuya’s nickname. Yet in Hakuya’s case, I believe it was because he is a Prime Minister who did many things in the back. Or because of his usual dark attire. Or because of his “Man in Black” subordinates.

[2] Official Romanization (taken from LN Volume 1), also took note of Hakuya's Black Clothes:



[3] Jeanne referred to her sister with Aneue姉上 a very formal (and archaic) way to refer one’s sister. The brother counterpart is Aniue兄上



[4] Before the era of rapid international transport, or essentially instantaneous communication (such as the telegraph in the mid-19th century and then radio), diplomatic mission chiefs were granted full (plenipotentiary) powers to represent their government in negotiations with their host nation. Conventionally, any representations made or agreements reached with a plenipotentiary would be recognized and complied with by their government. This might change when the communication device based on Royal Voice Broadcast Orbs becomes widespread, though.

[5] Read Footnote 1, point B

[6] Machiavellianism: the employment of cunning and duplicity in statecraft or in general conduct

[7] Also known as Gap. For example: Gap-Moe is that moe feeling you experience when a character acts in way that contradicts the way he/she usually acts. Mostly a tsundere trait.

[8] Want to write: “Make Elfrieden Kingdom Great Again”. But I guess everyone is tired from this joke.

[9] Like contracts or other legal rules. Imagine what would happen if China or Russia held USA’s citizens registry, government copies of legal jurisprudence, or other classified information.

[10] アツカンベー Akkanbo expression, like this:



Also, in case no one realize. The animal implicitly referring to Roroa is either Tanuki / Japanese Raccoon Dog or Raccoon, both is considered to be mischievous and trickster in Japanese and Native American folklore. Since this is Japanese story, perhaps it is Tanuki.

## Chapter 05 – As a Ruler C: Crime

In a certain great noble's residence, twelve shadows were having a secret conversation.

"What do you think of this assembly"

"Fourteen of us have been gathered from so many nobles. Probably ... the kingdom's side had noticed as well"

"There are reports of the black hand's dogs sniffing around us"

"Then the goal of this assembly is ..."

"A warning, I surmise"

"A warning? You don't think it's a trap?"

"Hu hu hu. Unlike the corrupt rebelling nobles, we did not leave any evidence. Neither the King nor the black hand could judge us"

"I see ... that's why they're giving us a warning"

"Indeed. Tomorrow will be your turn, is what they want to keep us down with"

"Two of the Three Dukes have been defeated and the nobles who could not participate in the war had lost their influence. If that King could silence us, then there would be no more obstacles to his rule"

"Hmph ... so it's all going according to what he wants"

"But on the other hand, you can say that this is all he could do to us"

"Ku ku ku, that's right. Which is why we should lay low for now. We need to avoid rousing his anger and act as to not give him any cause to punish us. Rather,

we should make a show of cooperation with the King's plans"

"What an annoyance"

"What ... it's not going to take that long. Without any more obstacles, that youngster of a King is going to innovate his policies at a faster pace than before. There are going to be people who will reject such quick changes. We can just support those people from the shadows, and the more he put them down, the more that King is going to look like a tyrant, and they will simply rise in revolt"

"So you mean he's not going to last long"

"Indeed. At that time, we can just install someone who will make it easier for us to move"

"And then we could get back the peaceful rule like we had under King Alberto"

"Right now the King has influence. We should keep from getting swallowed by that influence and let it dry out. But when the time comes ..."

"What do we do with the houses of Javana and Saracen? They had their heads changed, didn't they?"

"Leave them be. They incurred the King's displeasure and became unable to maintain their houses. Nothing we can do about that"

"Naturally. Well then, gentlemen, I hope that we will all keep to what we decided today"

"Yes. For the return of our era"

"" For the return of our era ""



I didn't even feel disturbed when Soma told me that Duke Carmine died in jail

I only said a short “really ...”. Even though when someone I admired like a father and as a mentor died, my heart felt so calm I surprised myself. It’s not that I wasn’t sad, but rather, I was so sad my chest felt like it would split, and yet, I just acted like my normal self. I think ... this was surely because I had a presentiment that it would happen

That Duke Carmine must have chosen to draw all the darkness of this country onto himself and destroy them alongside himself, and that Soma will not leave that resolve of his to waste

Georg Carmine was a great man I respected and admired. He was strong, noble, and to me, a military man I must strive towards. I held him in reverence, and I thought that I must become a person like him

As for Soma ... he was someone I decided to support of my own will. I couldn’t clearly say what I felt toward Soma, having lived a life unrelated to things like love (as a member of royalty, being married out of political convenience is a given, so I don’t have any illusions about marriage), but seeing the faces of Aisha, who was full of smiles when she became the second Queen Consort, and of Juna as she smiled when he told her “I will someday receive you (as Royal Consort)”, stung my chest a little

These were the decisions of the two men in my life that I held dear. Even if it was hard, even if it were heartbreaking, I couldn’t excuse myself to their decisions if I couldn’t accept them. I had decided to believe in what they decided, which was why I didn’t make any grievance when Soma let me know of Duke Carmine’s death. That wouldn’t be what Duke Carmine wanted. I will pay my respects to Duke Carmine by magnificently standing by Soma’s side like I always do.

Then I will continue to believe in Soma from now on. Whatever decisions he will make, I will accept those and stand by his side. Today was the day we judge Duke Vargas and Carla. I still wanted to save Carla as my friend, but I have resolved to accept whatever Soma will decide. That is, no matter how sad the outcome would be

... and yet

Say, Soma. Why do you look so pained?



The Great Plaza of Parnam was now wrapped in a strange mood. The father and daughter Castor and Carla will soon be judged here in this place. By the petitioning of Ecksel who had gained distinguished service in the last war, the right to judge them had been taken from the deliberation committee. It wasn't a commendable act, but forced by Ecksel's arm-twisting. That was why Soma was now judging the two

The basic arrangement of people was not too different from the audience the other day. Soma was seated at the seat of honor in a rather elegant chair, even though it's not the throne. Standing to his left and right was Aisha and I. Aisha's position was not her usual one step behind but right beside him, that change was due to her candidacy as Queen Consort. Inevitably, because she stood next to Soma who had everyone's attention, the stares also fell onto her. She looked rather tense

And at the position of the people requesting audience, was the former Marshal of the Air Force Castor Vargas and his daughter Carla, kneeling with their hands tied behind them. They seemed to have utterly resolved themselves for this, and

was kneeling with their backs straight. On either side of them stood Prime Minister Hakuya and Duchess Walter, facing each other. Hakuya would be prosecuting them of their crimes, while Duchess Walter would be pleading for their defense

In a normal trial, the prosecutor and defense would argue over whether there was a crime, but here, the crimes of the pair had already been established. It will be conducted with the prosecutor Hakuya giving a recommended sentence, continued by the defense Duchess Walter advocating for a reduction in penalties. If the advocacy was approved, then the penalty will be reduced, if it wasn't then they will receive the sentence just as Hakuya had proposed. There would be no pleading innocence

Then, there were fourteen nobles sat in a line next to each other on the long edge of a table, auditing the trial. I heard that Soma will be asking their opinions as the trial proceeds. He said they were randomly chosen ... but I wonder if that's really true. The nobles looked to be whispering among themselves

(I wouldn't be surprised if something's afoot. This is the trial Soma thought up after all ...)

There had been cases here in this country where judgement rights had been taken from the deliberation committee, though not many of them, but in those cases it was normal for the King to arbitrarily pass judgement without any room for objections. So, a trial court such as this had no precedent in history, this court of trial would be the precedent, and for that, I had no idea what was going to happen

“Now, let's conduct the trial for Castor and Carla, shall we”

Soma said in a quiet voice, and Hakuya came up first to read the charges against the two

“The pair Castor and Carla, despite having being handed authority by the crown, had rebelled against His Highness Soma, disregarded his Final Counsel and raised their swords against the Royal Guard. This is a Crime of Treason, and thus is subject to Forfeiture of Lands and Property and Capital Punishment”

I suppose I should've expected Hakuya to request the death penalty on them. It was a matter of course, treason is a crime that implicated one's family to the third degree and is punishable by death. That was why Duke Vargas heeded Duchess Walter's counsel and cut familial ties in order to affect the least number of people. Also, by using Duchess Walter's merits, it was decided that Carla's young ties-severed brother would inherit family headship, on top of the reduction in territory to just Crimson Dragon Castle Village and its immediate surroundings. His advisors would be the boy's mother, Ecksel's daughter Accella, and the family butler Tormann

Then, Ecksel also held defense, pleading for a reduction in their penalties. Furthermore, she had consulted beforehand to offer “her own head or the rights of House Walter to Lagoon City for both their lives,” but was refused. Having her head is out of the question, and taking the territories of all the Three Dukes would cause the other nobles to be nervous of Soma

“Castor Vargas' decision to resist against His Highness was not made out of wanting to supplant him, but of loyalty to the previous king Albert. He had no designs on the throne. Of course, since Lord Albert formally ceded the throne to His Highness out of his own will, Castor had no right to resent him for it, but the handover happened so fast caused confusion for him, and Carla only followed behind him. Fortunately, there were no casualties among the populace or the Royal Guard during the Crimson Dragon Castle Village attack. I therefore plead that they may have just their lives spared”

Duchess Walter, seeking a reduction in penalties. Soma just silently listened to what she had to say. His face did not look as agonized as it was before. In fact, he looked expressionless, as if he was thinking about something. He was probably hiding it

Having heard the prosecutor and defense, Soma opened his mouth

“Castor. Do you have anything to say?”

“None”

Said Duke Vargas clearly

“The general of the defeated army had no right to say anything. Have my head if you will”

“... is that so”

“Just one thing. The one that instigated the war was me. Carla was only following my orders. I will bear the crime and the punishment. I don’t mind the rack nor being made a show, so I beg of you to pardon Carla’s life”

“Father”

Still with his hands tied, Duke Vargas lowered his head, brushing the ground. Seeing the proud Castor Vargas acting like this surprised even his daughter Carla. However, Soma, still with an expressionless face, sighed and said “Don’t say something so selfish”

“I heard that Carla was leading the Air Force troop that time. I couldn’t possibly let go of a person like that. You should’ve thought about this when you



decided to fly the banners of revolt”

“Guh ...”

Duke Vargas bit the corner of his mouth, but he didn’t say anything more.  
Next, Soma turned to Carla

“Carla. Do you have anything to say?”

“... I do not”

Carla weakly shook her head

“Will that be all? Are you sure you have nothing to say?”

“... Then just one thing, I apologize for not knowing my place. The one who doesn’t know their place was me, not King Soma”

Carla said as she hung her head. This time it was Duke Vargas’ turn to open her eyes wide. Carla, who said to me “I’m afraid to be so powerless” while hugging her knees. She was probably in the same state of mind now as she was in back then

“Will you not ask for a pardon?”

“I will not. Judge me as you will”

“... I see”

Soma took no more look at them. He turned to the nobles behind them and said

“Now then, I would like to ask the gentlemen gathered here for your opinions. Though ill-advised, they did commit treason against the current King, that is me. What judgement do you think is appropriate for these fools? Please speak your thoughts freely on the matter”

Soma said that with a look that even scared me a little. That moment, I felt something was slightly amiss. The way he said it is as if he weren't giving them any avenues of escape. While asking for their opinions, he was threatening them as if saying, “None of you are defending the traitors, right?”

Seeing the nobles with that in mind, I recalled some dark rumors. I noticed they were mostly the houses who stood on the fence during the emergency. Could Soma be making an example of Carla and Castor to have them swear allegiance to him? “Obey me if you don't want to end up like them”? It does sound fitting for a ruler, but ...

One of the nobles then stood up and raised his voice

“Your highness! Aren't you making it sound like their crimes had already been decided!”

The one who raised his voice was a blonde haired young man. He was probably about the same age as Hulbert, but he didn't have Hulbert's rough look, but an image of earnestness instead

“This is?”

“The current head of the House of Saracen. Piltory Saracen”

Hakuya answered Soma's question. Piltory then said

“I understand that this is the place to discuss the importance of the crime. If, if Your Highness is going to press your own intentions down on them, there is no meaning to this court!”

“Gah hah ha ha! Well said of you, young Lord Saracen!”

Then another noble stood up. A man with his grey hair swept back, a similarly grey moustache, and strong muscles despite his advanced age. Hakuya narrowed his eyes and announced his name

“The current head of the House of Javana. Lord Owen Javana!”

“Lord Black Eminence. That Duke Vargas over there had from a hundred years ago, from before we were born, continued to defend this country. Though there is his mental rawness as a dragonewt, his heart that wants to protect this country should still be the same. To begin with, he did not turn his sword against Your Highness for his own ends, but because he wanted the previous king, Lord Albert’s reign to return, that is what I think”

“Are you saying it can’t be helped since we’re young?”

Seeing Hakuya glare at him, Owen shook his head, saying “not at all”

“That is not what I’m saying. I’m merely saying that Duke Vargas is quick tempered as Your Highness Soma was formally handed the throne. His crime is also not something pardonable. However, Lord Vargas had already lost his status, his titles, his territory, and his property. I’m thinking, it might be too heavy to also take his life and his daughter’s together”

“Then you’re saying to forgive the traitor?”

“... I find it regrettable, as an old man. Vargas still had two, three hundred more years of active service left in him. I don’t think there’s anyone in this

country now who could command the Air Force better than Lord Vargas”

“Your Highness! Did you not say that ‘If you have talent then I have use for you’? Are you going to let go of a hard-to-find talent just like that! Lord Vargas who worried over the future of this country with the previous King and bared his fangs against Your Highness is not inferior to us nobles who couldn’t take any sides and stood on the sidelines! Please be lenient on them, just like Lady Walter had said!”

“ ... ”

Listening to the two, Soma closed his eyes for a while, then ordered

“Take those two away”

Promptly, soldiers surrounded the two and took them away from the plaza. At that time, the look of Owen who stiffened with an astonished face as the soldiers took him away and Piltory who was yelling “Your Highness, please reconsider!” contrasted each other

After the two were taken away, the plaza fell into an eerie silence. Nobody dared to breathe or say a word. Soma cut through the mood

“Now, everyone else’s opinion?”



From then on, all the nobles’ opinions were “death to the both of them”

“The law is the law”

“Forgiving them now would be a bad example for the retainers”

“No traitor to Your Highness should be taking any positions”

They were saying things like that, but it was plainly obvious that they were really thinking, “we don’t want to earn Soma’s wrath like those two” ... I don’t understand anymore. Sure, now the nobles that remained in this place would fear Soma and would find it hard to plan against him, but I wonder, between the twelve that remained here, and the two taken away just now, which ones would be of more benefit to Soma

(... Don’t waver, me. You’ve decided to believe in Soma)

I stealthily pinched my own thigh, desperately shutting out the conflict inside me. Then I heard Soma softly say, “I have to do it, don’t I”

“I have heard all your opinions”

Soma stood up and raised his right hand, and finally swung it down

“Cut them down”

The next moment, I heard the sound of swinging blades, blood danced in the air

And twelve heads rolled

## Chapter 05 – As a Ruler C/D: An Inquiry on Cruelty as Defined by Machiavelli

AN: This is a Soma-style musing on *The Prince*, presented as a light report. Readers who think, “I don’t care about theory, gimme the story!” may skip it over.

Machiavelli’s ‘*The Prince*’ was called the Devil’s Book and for several hundred years was censured by the Christian Church, particularly the descriptions contained in Chapter VIII: Concerning Those who Have Obtained a Principality by Wickedness, and Chapter XVII: Concerning Cruelty and Clemency, and Whether It’s Better to be Loved than Feared.

Chapter VIII debated the theme of “Why is it that those who took over a country by using unscrupulous means enjoy a peaceful reign without experiencing revolts while rulers who gained their countries through rightful means lose theirs.” In it, Machiavelli stated that “it follows from severities being properly used.”

Moreover Chapter XVII argued that “Because people are fickle creatures, one should choose love rather than fear when one must be dispensed with”, explaining that “It is much safer for a ruler to be feared than loved.” He continued to say “When a prince ... has under control a multitude of soldiers, then it is quite necessary for him to disregard the reputation of cruelty”, and that “Hannibal ... having led an enormous army ... no dissensions arose either among them or against the prince, whether in his bad or in his good fortune. This arose from nothing else than his inhuman cruelty”

The Christian Church, that preached kindness, cited these examples and said,

“What is the meaning of this, encouraging rulers who should rule with benevolence to be cruel!” and banned *The Prince*. It then gained the infamy of being the Devil’s Book, and the contents locked up without being scrutinized, leading to misunderstandings that “*The Prince* advocated brutality,” and that “*The Prince* endorsed the killing of dissenters.” It still sometimes received this valuation even now when it had been reappraised.

But what I would like to assert here is that Machiavelli was saying that ‘The subject of cruelty is not something that is questioned in detail.’ Despite saying in Chapter VIII, “Injuries ought to be done all at one time so that being tasted less, they offend less,” regarding the subject of it, Machiavelli never concluded that “this is it!” (though he did offer some historical examples).

The same thing goes with Chapter XVII. Despite saying that “In the actions of Hannibal contained his inhuman cruelty,” he never alluded to what those “cruelties” are.

So then, what was meant by Machiavelli when he said “Injuries that ought to be done all at one time,” or “cruelty” that should be borne by the Prince? We can only deduce it from among the cruel acts existent on this world, minus the things Machiavelli said “not to be done.”



Firstly, in Chapter XVII, Machiavelli stated that a Prince should avoid being hated if he does not win love, and in order to not be hated, they should “abstain from the property of his citizens and subjects and from their women.” In the same vein, he also stated that “when it is necessary for him to proceed against the life of someone, he must do it on proper justification and for manifest cause.” In other words, “Even with a just cause, a ruler is not to lay his hands on his subjects and citizens’ property and women, and should only take their lives



only with a proper cause (or, to not take their lives without one).”

Which means, the “cruelty” referred to by Machiavelli would be limited to “killing with a just cause.” Then what kind of “killing with a just cause” is allowed? Is it what the Christian Church claimed, “kill all who oppose you”?

I very well understand that opinion is divided on this matter, but as for my own, I think I would say no. Why? Because Machiavelli himself said thus in *The Prince* in chapter XX:

“Princes, especially new ones, have found more fidelity and assistance in those men who in the beginning of their rule were distrusted than among those who in the beginning were trusted”

Those men who at the beginning have been hostile, were they to fall into the need of assistance to support themselves, can always be won over with great ease. Once they had been won over, they would be tightly held to serve the prince with fidelity, in order to cancel the bad impression that is had of them, and thus the Prince can extract more profit from them than those who had served him from the beginning with security. To speak of Japanese History, it would be easy to understand from Shibata Katsuie who served as general to Oda Nobunaga. Upon the treason of Nobunaga’s younger brother, Katsuie had at first sided with the younger brother, but would later come down and become Nobunaga’s vassal. From then onwards, Katsuie would desperately serve Nobunaga and become the chief retainer, but were his actions to be found lacking, he would be expelled from the Oda clan just like the similarly capitulated Hayashi Hidesada and Sakuma Nobumori.

This means that Machiavelli’s “cruelty” is not necessarily “always kill off your enemies.” But what is it then? For that we only have to look at and deduce from Machiavelli’s examples of “severities being properly used.” When Syracuse fell

under attack from Carthage, Agathocles conducted a surprise attack on the Senate and prominent citizens of Syracuse, entrenching his own influence and brushing off Carthage's attack. Oliverotto, in order to gain sovereignty over his birth town Fermo, conducted a surprise attack on the influential citizens including his own backer, his uncle, gaining control of Fermo within just a year.

Also, Machiavelli's ideal ruler, Cesare Borgia, murdered the opponents who reconciled with him, cementing his power base. One of those opponents were Oliverotto. Machiavelli looked positively towards this act. From these three examples we can see the point that "the target of one's cruelty is factionally one's own."

Though they belonged to the same faction, the senators that will get in the way of one's policies, family that will get in the way of one being a ruler, and though reconciled, the allies that may one day turn their backs on you ... these hindrances who could well be said 'snakes in the grass' were those that Machiavelli turned the spear of cruelty towards.

He said as much in chapter XVII: Hannibal was described as "inhumanly cruel" towards his army, but the subject of this cruelty can be seen through the comparison that was brought out, Scipio. Scipio was also a prominent general, but he was beset by rebellions from his men and insurrection from the citizens. The reason mentioned was that due to his gentle character, he was unable to punish his vassals who committed unreasonable acts. Which means that Hannibal took the opposite stance, convicting his allies, becoming feared by his men, and they did not revolt against him, regardless of the outcome of his battles.

Considering the fact that the target of Machiavelli's advocated "proper use of severities" were the enemies in one's own camp, and considering his other claims in *The Prince*, whereby "when your neighbors come to blows, it will always be advantageous to declare yourself for one or the other" and that

“doing so is more advantageous than staying neutral,” 1 you can see Machiavelli’s underlying idea, namely:

“Do not put your faith in the bat 2 who allies himself to the winning side”

Machiavelli was a diplomat in Italy’s troubled times, full of wiles and trickery 3. He understood that by overlooking those who kept their stances indefinite claiming that the situation is hazy and unclear, they would become a source of problems later. Which was why he advised the uprooting of those lesions under the name of “cruelty.”

And that was why I beheaded these twelve nobles.

1.TN: The Prince, Chapter XXI ↩

2.TN: Referring to Aesop’s fable of the Birds and the Beasts: The birds and the beasts were having a war. The birds said to the bat: come with us, and the bat said “no, for I am a beast.” The beasts said to the bat: come with us, and the bat said “no, for I am a bird.” When the conflict was settled without a fight, the bat came to the birds to partake in the rejoicings, but they turned against him and he had to fly away. He then went to the beasts but had to beat a retreat, lest they would have torn him to pieces. “I see now,” said the bat, “he that is neither one nor the other has no friends.” ↩

3.TN: JP = Kenboujussuu, which, incidentally, also means Machiavellianism ↩

## Chapter 05 – As a Ruler D: Punishment

Right behind the beheaded nobles, ten-odd dark figured men stood. Their faces were wrapped in black cloth, and they were wearing shinobi-like black garmints. In their hands they held bloodied swords, obviously being the ones who did away with the nobles' heads. The sudden entry of the men and their equally sudden violence took everyone's breath away. Only Hakuya and I still had the same expressions.

"Huh!? Soma!"

"Your Highness! Get behind me!"

Liscia and Aisha tried to cover me and stood in front of me with their swords drawn, but I gently laid my hand on their shoulders.

"It's all right, they're my 'underlings'"

"Underlings ... eh ...?"

As Liscia became confused, one of the men stepped up close. Unlike the other men who were wearing impersonal shinobi clothes, this one was wearing an impressive set of metallic black armor. He was nearly two meters tall and had a muscled physique that can even be seen through his armor. Looking from the neck down he looked exactly like "The Dark Knight", but his face was covered by a black tiger mask. Black Tiger Mask knelt before me and bowed his head.

“Mission accomplished, Milord”

Black Tiger Mask reported in a heavy voice matching his appearance.

“Huh!? That voice ... hnng”

Liscia was about to say something, but I gripped her shoulder tight with my hand. She looked towards me but she seems to have noticed something. She silently sheathed her sword. Looking at Excel, she had her eyes wide open, but I'm sure she gets what was going on. She then closed her eyes. Then I patted the shoulder of Aisha, who was still on high alert.

“Aisha, you put your sword down, too”

“B, but ...”

“His name is Kagetora. Leader of the intelligence force under my direct comand, the Black Cats”

As I said that, the Black Cats members raised their swords in front of themselves in synchrony. Having been made a fool of by Imperial intelligence at the Amidonian capital Vannes, I recently organized this unit to specialize in intelligence work directly under me to counter them. To be more accurate, I took the few intelligence operatives Hakuya had, increased their numbers, made an elite troop out of them, put Kagetora who had excellent command capability as leader in charge, and reformed them to be a unit under my direct supervision.

They are a unit with many secrets. Nobody knew who their members really were, and it's a mystery how they were able to work in harmony, even though they were only instituted the other day. Particularly puzzling is the true identity of Kagetora. Seeing how he handles this mysterious unit like his own hands and

feet, he gave the impression of a long-serving general, but did a person like this even exist in Elfrieden? Who is it? Nobody knew who he really was.

“... Say, Soma. Is Kagetora ...”

“Nobody knows who he really is. Capisce?”

“Ah, okay ...”

Liscia vigorously nodded with an expression that says “I can’t say anything.” Immediately, I then ordered Kagetora and the rest of the Black Cats.

“After you’ve done tidying up the nobles’ bodies, contact the soldiers stationed near their residences. Have them break in and seize the evidence. Suppress any resistance.”

“As you will”

The Black Cats took off right after they put the nobles’ bodies away. Kagetora was the last to leave the plaza after giving Liscia one last look. Having seen them off, Liscia sent a harsh look at me and said

“... You are going to explain what this is all about, right”

“Yes, but ... where should I start?”

“First ... Tell me why did you kill the nobles”

“Yes, I suppose I should start there ...”

I unhurriedly explained the reason for the killings.



“About the reason why I killed those twelve houses, that’s because they had connections with Amidonia as well. It had been investigated and confirmed by Hakuya and Georg.”

“You mean they’re colluding with Amidonia?”

“That’s not quite right. I said ‘as well’. They had connections with Amidonia, as well as the corrupt nobles, and also with our side ‘as well’.”

“Eh? What’s that supposed to mean ...”

“It means they’re fence-sitters. Going with the one who seems to be winning.”

Those nobles had always shown that they intend to stick with the winning side and avoid trouble. If they’re just that, I can’t tell them apart from the nobles who were just waiting and seeing during the war with the Three Dukes, but it’s a different matter once they have connections with foreign powers. When the Kingdom was lethargic they toadied up to Amidonia, when the Three Dukes declared war they went to Georg, and now they came to me.

“Then once they ensured their own safety, they would rile up dissent behind the shadows. The way it works is that people with insecurities make easy pawns for them. They’d gain profit by providing goods and people to the rebel side, and if the rebels weakened they’d crush them themselves to gain merit. If suspicious eyes trained in on them they’d instigate malcontents somewhere else to turn those eyes away from them. ... They’ve been doing that again and again during your father’s reign.”

“No way ...”

“And what’s more dangerous about them is that they don’t do it directly by themselves and act like loyal retainers when we’re strong, making them hard to convict. They do their job properly when we’re on the rise, after all. Rulers who believe in their political power, who are gentle and trusting toward their retainers are the ones who’d fall for their tricks, thinking ‘I’ll be fine if I just

established a stable administration. There's no need to antagonize our own allies'"

"But ... you killed them all, didn't you?"

"... I am under no illusion that my rule will be a stable one. In fact, I believe I'll be standing at the crossroads of fate someday. At that time, fence-sitters like those are going to be harmful, I'm sure. If they hurt people I care about, like you, Aisha, or Juna, it'll be too late to say 'I should've killed them when I had the chance'. If that happens, I'll probably go crazy. Which is why I chose to nip it in the bud now."

Machiavelli said that the affairs of the world are governed by fortune that men with their wisdom cannot direct them and that no one can help them, but nevertheless, that fortune is the arbiter of one half of our actions, leaving us to direct the other half, perhaps a little less <sup>1</sup>. A person's fortunes depend on whether or not their actions fit the period, but that can only be seen only once it's over. However, by preparing for a sudden turn of events beforehand, one can avert the flow into something more manageable.

The important thing is to not be optimistic about the situation and be decisive in striking everything there is to strike when one can strike (in the words of Machiavelli, "fortune is a woman, and if you wish to keep her under it is necessary to beat and ill-use her". A feminist would fly into a rage hearing this). That was why, even though I hesitated, I resolved to strike at the heads of the twelve noble houses.

After hearing me talk, Liscia finally nodded.

"I understand what you're thinking. What are you going to do with the Lords Saracen and Javana who were made to leave their seats?"

"About that, please allow me to explain"



Then Hakuya stepped forward.

“The previous Lords Saracen and Javana used to work with the other twelve houses, but with their deaths those relations were cut off. The current heads, Lord Piltory is a good young man who excels at the pen and the sword, and Lord Owen is a sober and honest hot-blooded man. They will serve His highness without any double-dealing. I thought we can see that by how they acted when they were dragged away from the plaza”

“... so you’re carefully picking who to execute”

“It is as you say. The people executed were those who are not without fault. We should be breaking into their residences gathering evidence as we speak. It’s not commendable of us to subvert the order of evidence and execution, but I hope you’ll understand.”

Having said that, Hakuya bowed. That was probably his way of following up on me just now. He was taking care to not let my relationship with Liscia and the others become strange by conveying that I didn’t execute the twelve nobles out of mere suspicion. Liscia seemed to understand as well and did not ask any further. Really ... such a reliable retainer and (future) wife.

“I understand about the twelve, but what if the other two Lords also tried to curry favor with you?”

“In that case, I had plans to provoke those two to anger. Well, if they did try that to His Highness, we can’t really trust them afterwards, though”

“You even thought that far, huh ...”

Liscia looked at me with an appalled look 2. Well, uh, all that about reading people’s hearts are Hakuya’s area of responsibility you know. I’m not that kind of an evil character ... maybe. Seeing me look away, Liscia breathed a sigh.

“... So, what are you going to do with Carla and her father?”

“... I was getting to that part”

I stood in front of the bound Castor. Castor looked me straight in the face. There was not a hint of his earlier resistance in his eyes.

“Castor Vargas. Ever since you have disregarded the Final Counsel, you have effectively become a ‘traitor’”

“... I understand”

“What’s this? You’ve become unresistant all of a sudden”

“Not after seeing ‘that’. I can’t call you a greenhorn anymore now”

After showing how I dealt with the twelve nobles, their opinion of me seem to have changed. Castor bowed his head deeper than before, pressing his forehead against the ground.

“So please, let me bear all the crimes. Please at least save Carla”

“That’s not for you to decide”

I dismissed him with a cold tone.

“I will give my verdict. Your crime of treason is evident, but as Piltory and Owen said earlier, your services in defending this country for a hundred years shall be acknowledged. Also, your titles, lands, assets, and the Vargas house name had already been taken from you. Therefore I shall allow you to keep your life”

I indicated to Excel who was silently watching over the outcome.

“Castor’s person shall be entrusted to Lady Excel, but he is not to set foot in the former Vargas Duchy. This includes contacting the successor of House Vargas, Carl, and his mother Accella. Excel, this happened because of what your son in law had perpetrated, see it done properly.”

“... yes! I will accept this judgement.”

Even as she teared up, Excel gave a solid response. I saw her mouth silently moving, saying “thank you very much”. I paid it no mind and then stood in front of Carla, who gave me a weak look.

“Carla, you are guilty of the same crime. However, you do not have Castor’s ‘Hundred years of service’ on your behalf. There is nothing to reduce your penalty with”

“ ... ”

“P, please wait! In that case then kill me! I was the one who ordered the Air Force to point their blades at the King! So let me instead of Carla ...”

“Silence!”

I roared at Castor who was pressing his head on the ground again, and ordered the guards to take him away. He shouted “take me instead of her!” all the way out, but I had no obligation to listen. Once the grounds had gone quiet, I continued.

“Your crimes of treason are evident, but it wouldn’t be proper to let the main perpetrator live while killing his daughter. For that reason your life will be spared, but you will henceforth live as a slave. The owner will be ... me.”

“Yes ...”

Carla weakly nodded, being ordered to become my slave. Excel seemed like she wanted to say something, but she held it in. Hakuya closed his eyes, Aisha nervously observed the air around the place, and finally, Liscia made no movements, watching my deeds in silence.

“I will give you your instructions in due time, but there’s one order I want to give you.”

“... by your will.”

I stepped down to Carla who had her head down, whispering into her ear a ‘certain order’ that only she could hear.

As soon as I did, Carla’s eyes opened wide.



I couldn’t believe my ears. King Soma whispered the order into my ear.

(Kill me)

I was surprised. I looked wide eyed at King Soma who nodded.

(Not now, of course, but should I ever become a tyrant, it will be your job to put an end to me. With your valor, it should be an easy task to kill me should it not?)

Kill me if I ever became a tyrant ... what is he saying all of a sudden!?

(Why ... are you telling me this ...?)

(Because Liscia and the others could never have done it)

Soma awkwardly smiled as he said so.

(There's come to be a lot of people I care about around me before I knew it. Just the other day, I gained other fiancées besides Liscia. Including Aisha over there)

(Well ... congratulations?)

(Thanks. That in itself is not a problem, but ... I fear that someday I would abuse my power and fall into tyranny. I worry whether Liscia and the others would stop me if that happened)

(Liscia would, I believe. She's an earnest person)

(I wonder about that? She would remonstrate me for debauchery or massacring common civilians, but what about when I had justification like just now? I don't think enforcement is such a big problem every once in a while, but the more you do it the more it becomes an irrecoverable situation. If that happens, would Liscia be able to cast me away?)

... that ... would probably be impossible.

(It's not my place to say, but ... Liscia is head over heels for you. I think she is ready to follow along even should you fall down to hell.)

She's an earnest, wholehearted girl. She will likely sacrifice herself for Soma to the end. Soma also nodded.

(See? Aisha is likely the same way ... and I'm not too sure about Juna. Anyway, there are a lot of people around me who would go through sorrow with me. So you, Carla, before the people I care about fall into sorrow with me, it will be your job to put a stop to me.)

(... but I'm a slave. If I killed my master, the collar will kill me.)

(Yes. Therefore you should be resolved to die along with me when you do so.)

How easily he says such outrageous things. He was telling me to become the killing blade if he became a tyrant that must be stopped even at the cost of his life, and not only did he order me to kill him, he also told me to die. This was the reason he set me aside as his slave, to become the deterrence to prevent him from becoming a tyrant.

(Really ... you never go easy, do you)

(I only go easy on people important to me)

(It's your own self, you know. Still, I understand what you're saying)

Just like before the battle with Amidonia, I thought he had too little respect for his own self. He should treat himself better ... then people wouldn't be so worried for him. Liscia, you've fallen for a troublesome person. ... I suppose I should be the one to keep my dear friend's love away from a sad future. I fixed my posture and made a deep bow.

"I understand and accept your command. Until that day, as I wish for it to never come, I shall devote myself in service to you."

Soma nodded in satisfaction to my reply.

“Currently, I do not have work for a slave in the castle yet, so for the time being ... go and listen well to the chamberlain ‘senpai’ over there”

As he said that, he looked away in an obvious way. Liscia looked aghast from the depths of her heart. ... eh?

++++++

- 1.TN: The Prince, Chapter XXV
- 2.TN: An akireru face, variously translated as “amazed”, “shocked”, “disgusted”, or “appalled”. It actually is something like this. I would also like to take this opportunity to explain nigawarai, or “wry smile”. It actually is a “sweat drop” smile, like so.

## Chapter 05 – As a Ruler: After

After the judging was over, Soma, Aisha, and I returned together to the government office. Along the way, Soma suddenly staggered.

“Soma!”

“Your Highness!”

Aisha and I went to steady him, but Soma leaned his hand on the wall and said, “I’m alright, just a little unsteady,” while stopping us with his free hand.

“But ...”

“I’m fine. ... please let me be alone for a while”

With that he went alone inside the government office. I peeked at his expression as he did, he was pale. He was obviously in bad shape. Left behind there, I talked to Aisha who was in the same situation.

“He was firm and resolute until just now ... what happened?”

“I don’t know, ... but”

“but?”

“He looks like a young warrior back from his first battle. His first ... killing”

“Which means ... the fact that he killed the twelve nobles was weighing on him somehow?”



But that was something Soma did out of his own consideration, right? Then there was no need to regret. Also, Soma killed Gaius VIII of the Principality of Amidonia before. They weren't his first kills. But when I pointed it out...

"This is just a guess, but with Gaius it was kill or be killed. However, in the twelve nobles' case, there was no direct threat to His Highness' life. Even though it was harmful to let them live, he must be continually arguing with himself whether or not his judgement to kill them was right.

Aisha said so as she watched the government office door in worry. ... that's right, I think Aisha's correct. I heard the world Soma came from was peaceful. It was probably because he came from such a world that Soma hated things that would bring about death. That said, he wasn't so optimistic as to think that things will be resolved without a single casualty. That was why the policies Soma took always try to bring about the most results with the least sacrifices.

That was something the ruler of a country would naturally be prepared to do. However, Soma's own heart was probably not so bold as to allow more than the least amount of sacrifices.

"Say Aisha. How do you deal with a warrior like that?"

"Right ... we make them forget, or maybe their superiors or seniors would invite them to drink or maybe play with women. These things ... are things that you'd compromise on after some time"

Drink, or maybe ....



The trial started in the afternoon. It's turned completely dark now. I didn't light any fire, and in the darkness of the government office I laid on the bed on my lonesome. There was a mountain of things I must do, but I told Hakuya in advance to let me skip on them just for today. I wanted to fall asleep, but contrary to that wish, my head was still clear.

When I tried working my head, the question of whether my earlier decision was correct or not popped into mind. I consider the execution of the twelve nobles was correct in the long term. Had I let them live, they would've hurt someone with a disaster they sowed, and I would surely regret it. Well, that's what I desperately told my own heart so I don't come to regret having killed them right now ...

[Do all the cruelty in one go]

[The prince need not mind the blame of ruthlessness]

[To prevent falling to ruin, choose the path of war]

[Once you have fallen to ruin, it will be too late to regret what you should have done back then]

Machiavelli's words replayed in my head. I was only searching for excuses, but if I was going to regret it either way, I should take the choice that kept those important to me from harm. I should've resolved myself when I made that decision, but that fact only made me more bitter at my wavering heart.

At that time, the entrance door suddenly opened. I moved my head to see, and there was Liscia and Aisha standing there.

Half-naked.

They were only wearing two pieces of hand-towel-sized cloth each. One was wrapped around their hips, the other around their chests like a tube top. Though the open door allowed light from the corridor in, the room was still too dark to make out the looks on their faces. That said, their body lines emphasized by the light's shadow was very suggestive. Though Aisha's body height and nice lines were outstanding, Liscia had her own well-proportioned beauty. ... honestly, if I weren't down on the dumps right now, I would've lost all powers of reason and jumped them.

"... what are you trying to pull"

A chilling tone that surprised even myself. Shit, what am I saying. This is just me venting out isn't it? I reworded myself in as calm a tone as I could manage.

"I thought I told you to let me be?"

"We can't possibly leave you alone looking like that, no?"

Without minding it, Liscia sat down on the bed where I was laying down. Aisha also excused herself and sat herself down on the other side from Liscia. Whichever way I turned my head, there was a pretty girl's ass waiting there. I had only the choice of covering my eyes with my arm and look up.

"What's all this about ... what do you want ..."

"That's ... um ... we wanted to make you, uh, forget ..."

"Huh?"

"ANYWAY! You can do, anything you like with us, so"

"Anyhow, this is the first time doing this for us, so we'll be in your care, Your Highness!"

"What are you on about Aisha. I'm ... not in the mood for that right now"

“Uuuuhh, maybe we should’ve brought miss Juna along too”

Well, Juna’s busy with the transfer from the Navy to us right now. Haah ... whatever, they did this because they were worried about me. While I was thinking that, Liscia timidly asked.

“Um, Soma ...”

“What is it?”

“... It’s cold, so can we get in the blanket?”

So they’re cold ... it’s going to be winter soon, after all. They’d sure be cold in that getup. Actually, they could’ve gone in with clothes, right? Anyway, I ushered the two into the blanket. It’s a single bed with not a lot of space for the three of us, so the two of them naturally were glued close to me. Not going crazy being sandwiched by two half-naked beauties only showed how far I’ve fallen into depression.

“Phew. It’s warm”

“It is, huh. I feel like I can fall asleep just like this”

“This is my room and also the government office, though ...”

But well ... it sure is warm. I felt my unease gradually dissolve into nothing. Human warmth is great, huh. My heart felt lighter just by having someone right by my side. I can actually feel being protected. I can actually feel wanting to protect. I ... can still go on.

“Both of you”

“Hm?”

“What is it?”

“Thank you”

I then fell into sleep.



One month later came news that “The Principality of Amidonia is in Revolt”.

## Chapter 06 – In Which I was Baiting Sea Bream with a Shrimp but Caught a Shark [1] A

There was a tiger in the middle of darkness, closing his eyes, while remembering the events of that day.



When he opened his eyes, the first thing he saw was a familiar ceiling.[2] While his mind was still hazy, he was staring at the patterns on the ceiling, but when he was fully conscious, he noticed that he was lying on a soft bed. This was strange. The last scenery that he saw should have been the prison. When he remembered this, he turned his neck, and found someone sitting on a chair besides the bed. That person was a young man who was looking over documents.

After he stared at the young man for a while, the young man seemed to have noticed his condition.

[Hm? Yo. Did you finally wake up?](A Certain Young Man)

The young man put the documents down and handed him a hand mirror that had been placed under the chair.

[You might have many things to ask, but first, please look at this.](A Certain Young Man)

As what the young man had said, he peeked at the mirror that was given to him. A tiger-faced beast-kin was reflected in it. A gold and black striped pattern that unmistakably belonged to a tigris(sword tiger)[3] (it was bigger than Earth's tiger and had long canines as its special trait). This overwhelmed him and caused him to gape as the young man spoke with a smile.

[You are a tiger. So you will be a tiger.][4](A Certain Young Man)

He didn't understand what the young man means by it, so he didn't say anything, but the young man was scratching his head as if he was embarrassed.

[Well, umm, after all..... don't merely push things on me. You need to bear it a bit, too.](A Certain Young Man)



"Kagetora[5]-sama"(?)

Someone was calling for him. His consciousness returned, and he saw a man wearing a black dog mask kneeling on the floor.

"So it is you Beo-..... Inugami.[6]"(Geo– Kagetora)

"Yes. It seems that the Mountain has moved."(Beo– Inugami)

The dog masked man who was called Inugami, bowed his head while reporting.

"..... I see. It has been one month since then. Unexpectedly, it is early."  
(Kagetora)

"That is true. Even though I thought that it should have taken a bit longer."  
(Inugami)

"Fumu..... Even if it is early, it is not a bad thing. After this, whatever happens on this land will be reported to His Majesty without omitting a single detail. This is our duty, the [Black Cats]!"(Kagetora)

""We understand. We accept the command.""(Black Cats)

Receiving Kagetora's order, beginning with Inugami, the Elfrieden Kingdom King's Guards Special Intelligence Operations Squad, the [Black Cat] began to move.



"King~, let's play~"(Girl)

"King, shoulder ride~"(Boy)

"....."(Cat-Girl)

A lively and cute 3 year old wolf-eared boy and a human girl came to play with me. The last one was a cat-eared girl as old as the other two, who had occupied my cross-legged lap and had fallen asleep not long ago. The cat tail that came out from her end was moving flip-floppily.

"Ummm, I can't move, so please don't climb on me on your own."(Souma)

""Yes!""(Girl)(Boy)

The two of them then began to climb on my back and playing happily. Yep, really cute, right? Even when they had climbed on my shoulders and then patted my face, this was something that I was used to.

"Fufufu, Your Majesty is really popular with the children."(Tomoko)

My lovable step-sister Tomoe-chan and her biological mother, Tomoko-san were smiling at me while folding the children's laundry. This place was the day nursery that was established inside the castle not long ago. It was for taking care of the children of the people who were working in the castle, like the maids and others. Then the relative of Tomoe-chan, who was semi-forcibly adopted as step-sister, Tomoko-san was working in this place as a live-in nursery worker. By the way, the wolf-eared boy who was touching my face with hands covered in drool was her eldest son (Tomoe-chan's little brother), Rou-kun.

"Nii-sama[7], I am happy that you play with Rou-kun and the others, but will this be alright? Won't nee-sama[8] will be mad at you again.....?"(Tomoe)

She was asking me while cuddling an infant in her arms. Without any animal negotiation duties, like the one with the Rhinosaurs, outside her lesson hours, Tomoe-chan will help her mother work. Considering that Tomoe-chan was still a ten-year old, she was a very reliable girl.

"It's fine, since I am not crowded with work right now. In addition, I properly left the【Living Poltergeist】working at the Government Affairs Office."(Souma)

"Is that so? Then, you can play a lot. That's great, right Rou-kun?"(Tomoe)

"Yes!"(Rou)

Rou-kun raised his hands up. How cute. I really like children. I could keep watching the tiny toddlers step, walking unsteadily all day long. By the way, it's not because I am a Lolicon or Shotacon! It's because this scene tickled my guardian instinct[9]. When my grandparents were still healthy, I helped at the recital in the neighborhood nursery. Because of this, I played with the children for a short while.

"What an amazing appearance you have, Master.[10]"(Carla)

When I turned around to the one who was greeting me, there she was, Carla, in the maid uniform.[11]



"Really? It isn't something that the current Carla can say herself, though."  
(Souma)

"That is..... You're right."(Carla)

Carla dropped her shoulders dejectedly. However, looking closely.....

"The maid uniform surprisingly doesn't suit you."(Souma)

"Please don't mention it..... I already thought about that myself."(Carla)

In the first place, Carla was a dragonewt, so compared to a normal human, they had a lot of additional parts.[12] She had a tail, she had dragon wing, and she also had small horns growing on her. To wear a maid uniform on top of these... Perhaps it could be said as an unbalanced idiosyncrasy.

"Moreover, isn't the skirt's length awfully short?"(Souma)

"P-please don't look."(Carla)

While saying this, Carla grasped the front end of her skirt. Every castle maid wore a classic long skirted maid uniform, but what Carla was wearing right now was something that wouldn't be out a place at a maid café: a knee-length puffed-wide dress.[13] It was evident that the style selection itself was excellent.

"Uuu..... The head maid..... said to wear this....."(Carla)

"Ah, so this is Serina-san's "tease" huh?"(Souma)

Not a "prank" but a "tease"[14]. It was not bore out of malice, rather, perhaps, it can be said as a form of emotional "affection(tease)". The core of it was to instigate the target's shyness. As a maid, the head maid Serina was capable, but it seems that she had a sadism habit, limited to cute girls. Furthermore, if the target had a determined spirit, then they would be "teased", so someone like Liscia and Carla was right in her strike zone. Liscia had told me about this before with a thousand yard stare on her face. I offered my prayers.  
[15]

"Nevertheless..... It has been about one month, huh? Isn't your maid training already over?"(Souma)

"T-training.....wh-...whoaa....."(Carla)

The moment I mentioned training, Carla was squatting and holding her head. Oh my, something did happen. To enter the maid corps, someone will receive training for the necessary skills, right?

"Wh-.....whip....."(Carla)

"Whip!?"(Souma)

"Hitting..... with a whip....."(Carla)

"Is the training that hard!?"(Souma)

"Furthermore, that whip is custom made, so even when it strikes the body, it won't leave any wounds..... but somehow it leaves me half in pain and half in pleasure."(Carla)

What the heck is that whip!? Rather than for training, that was for animal taming, right?[16]

"The head maid-dono said, [Since the pain will obstruct you from feeling pleasure, when you are enduring pain, then you will also feel pleasure as well.] [17] Since I didn't want to feel useless even though I had ended up as a slave, I planned to study and work hard as a maid..... But that whip is too scary. Soon I might be able to easily fall into the pleasure."(Carla)

"The maids corps are the Master's dogs. There is no place for a sow(female pig)....."(Serina)

"Hiiii!?"(Carla)

When I turned around, Serina-san was standing there with a refined smile. Or rather, Carla who could plunge into the battlefield without fear, was yelling in such a frightened state..... Just how intense was her fear?

"Is something wrong, Your Majesty?"(Serina)

"..... Nope, nothing."(Souma)

I felt bad for this, but I decided to play dumb so that the spearhead wouldn't be pointed at me. It's alright, Carla. You won't die..... Though, I don't know what will happen to your mental state.

"Now then, Carla-san. Shouldn't you make the bed in the Government Affairs

Office where His Majesty resides?"(Serina)

"No, it's just..... to enter a male acquaintance's room, as expected, it is embarrassing....."(Carla)

"What are you talking about? If you become a maid, then in the future you will have to make the bed where His Majesty and Princess Liscia zealously 【Self-Censored】, 【Self-Censored】 into 【Self-Censored】and 【Self-Censored】, with a composed face."(Serina)

"T-then, as expected, I wish to be excused from it!!"(Carla)

Carla was shouting with a deeply red face... But, huh? But didn't Serina-san just indirectly insult Liscia and I? Right now, I felt really uneasy, though.

"By the way, Your Majesty. Will Your Majesty's sides be alright?"(Serina)

"Eh?"(Souma)

"Well, behind Your Majesty, I caught sight of someone running towards this place."(Souma)

I turned my head to look at what made Serina smile when she said that...

"Aw crap."(Souma)

I put down Rou-kun who was riding on my back and then just as I was about to run, my neck was firmly grasped.

"Guagh!"(Souma)

"Hahahaha! I have been searching for you, Your Majestyyyy."(Owen)

When I looked over my shoulder, there was a swept-backed brown-haired hair, with the same brown-colored moustache, muscular middle aged man standing with a smile on his face. It was one of the people who didn't yield to my coercion at Castor and Carla's trial and defended them both, Owen Javana, the head of the Javana House. Since that trial, he had been appointed as my educator and advisor (and martial arts instructor). By the way, the () part will be described later.

Ah, by the way the other one who protected the Valgas father and daughter, was Piltory Saracen, the head of the Saracen House. When he heard the

misdeeds of the previous head of the Saracen House (his father), he said,

[What a thing..... To think that Father had done such deeds. I am even too ashamed to ask for an apology. Therefore, I offer this life to Your Majesty until it is dissipated. No matter how dangerous a task it will be, I will obey.]

He had spoken his honest mind just like his honest and young noble appearance. So just like he requested, I had appointed him to a dangerous position. [The Special Ambassador of the Elfrieden Kingdom's Embassy at the Grand Chaos Empire](shortened: Ambassador to the Grand Chaos Empire) was quite a dangerous position (since it was still experimental and it still wasn't clear how much extraterritoriality[18] could be accommodated, it was practically a dangerous position).

So, let's return the story back to Owen. Owen was a person who will talk bluntly and fairly, even when the other party is his superior. According to the person himself, [There is not much life left on these old bones, so let's live the few remaining years honestly!] (even if he does say that there's not much time left, he was someone who won't die even when killed.....). To have someone who could even speak bluntly to the ruler on my side, then the risk of me straying from the path will also decrease. Even though I had ordered Carla to kill me (and she die as a result) when push comes to shove, but if it is possible, I want to it to end without any need for me to be killed during my lifetime.

Well, for that reason, I appointed Owen as my educator, but.....

"Guahaha, Your Majesty! Please tell me when you are free from the government tasks! Now, now, let's start today's lesson!"(Owen)

"....."(Souma)

[Physical Education]was also included in Owen's education, so as soon as I was free from any government duties, I would be roped into training. If I was caught, then right after that, I needed to deal with the training menu of running, swinging practice, or mock combat, that was usually imposed on newcomer soldiers. Of course, not with the dolls, but with my own body.

"No-no, if it's practicing, then I can do it with Aisha, so....."(Souma)

"What are you talking about! Isn't the God Protected Princess(Aisha-dono) too

skillful for Your Majesty's level? It would only be a practice for doll manipulation!"(Owen)

"Your voice is too loud..... But, I can fight, barely, by manipulating dolls."  
(Souma)

"Then what will happen if somehow the dolls can't be used? Your Majesty's life is the same as this country's life. For example, when assaulted by assassins, if Your Majesty could defend the attacks for few bouts or even just one bout at the lowest, then it might buy enough time until the Guards arrive. That one bout might keep our country's downfall away and that one bout could bring glory for our country."(Owen)

Ugh..... I couldn't make any comebacks for this sound argument. I dropped my shoulders and Carla, who was being caught on the neck by Serina, looked at me with slightly pitying eyes.

"Master, too seems to be in trouble."(Carla)

"Look who speaking!"(Souma)

"Now then, if Your Majesty can understand, then let's move to the training ground!"(Owen)

"Carla-san too, please learn how to make a bed quickly."(Serina)

Then Carla and I, each of us were being dragged towards different directions.

*Hasta la vista, baby.*

[1] The title is a pun of Japanese idiom: 海老で鯛を釣る: Throw in a shrimp and pull out a sea bream (English equivalent will be: Use a sprat to catch a mackerel). The meaning which: to get something much more valuable or huge profit with a small investment, effort or price as bait. In this case, the profit is not just at sea bream level but SHARK level!

[2]A clichéd expression from Neon Genesis Evangelion that has been used to exhaustion in Japanese WNs...

[3]虎(ソード・タイガー): Written as Tora, which means tiger. Read as Sword Tiger. Tigris is Latin word for tiger.

[4]Here we go again. This line is from the opening song of a classic wrestling Anime “Tiger Mask”. The first lyric was: 虎だ、お前は虎になるのだ. “(Because/I say) you are to be (become) a tiger”. (listen at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OdJVSFh6008>)

[5]Kagetora means: Shadow Tiger. Although Shadow Tiger sounds awesome as codename, too.

[6]Inugami means: Dog God. Read <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Inugami> for more information.

[7]Older Brother in a formal way of referring.

[8]Older Sister in a formal way of referring.

[9]desire to protect

[10]Goshujin but without “sama” (you know that stereotype Maid Café greeting: “Okaerinasai Goshujin-sama” : Welcome back, Master). I understand that Carla was trying not to be too polite (not adding honorifics), but Goshujin without “sama” is also a way to politely refer to someone’s husband... Perhaps since Souma is Liscia’s (Carla’s BF) husband-to-be?

[11]Too bad, no illustration... yet! Perhaps LN Vol.3 will have it... (Until then, just imagine Tohru from Kobayashi-san Chi no Meidoragon)

[12]Originally: Options. If you buy Gunpla you would know this word by heart.

[14]Not “いじめ” ijime but いぢめ “ijime”. To understand the pun, one should know that there are two hiragana pronounced ji, which is じ and ぢ. These pairs are not interchangeable. Usually, ji is written as じ, but Souma change it into ぢ. Also, いぢめ didn’t really mean anything.

[15] A character who has just gone through some sort of trauma, learned something they probably didn’t need to know, or seen something they really shouldn’t have had to, will often have an unfocused, vacant stare into a vast abyss of nothingness, slipping into a shock and weariness from which it is very hard to escape. In other words: a PTSD stare. Also originally, Souma said “namusan”, 南無三, which is short for 南無三宝 — roughly, “Hail to the three treasures of Buddhism” (the Buddha, dharma, and the clergy). It’s used to request salvation in a moment of danger. Namusan, or Namuamidabutsu(南無

阿彌陀佛) is Buddhist counterpart of “Amen” in Japanese Buddhism, which can be found in most of prayers and rites.

(copy paste from Tvtropes and Touhouwiki since I am too lazy to write it myself)

[16]Animal Taming = you know... ‘That’ kind of animal.

[17]A Pavlovian/classical conditioning. Since,if Pain = Pleasure, if she feel pain then she will also feel pleasure even when in absence of an actual source of pleasure.For why pain can elicit pleasure I refer you to read: Pavlov’s dog shock experiment or Russell A. Powell, P. Lynne Honey, and Diane G. Symbaluk. *Introduction to Learning and Behavior*. Chapter 3 : Elicited Behavior and Clasical Conditioning (available on Google Books). It’s an interesting read.

[18] Extraterritoriality is the state of being exempted from the jurisdiction of local law.

## Chapter 06 – In Which I was Baiting Sea Bream with a Shrimp but Caught a Shark B

Then, one month passed when...

In the Royal Voice Broadcast Orb's installation room, I was currently in a meeting with a certain someone who was projected on the quasi-receiver set. It was a girl wearing a pure white dress that wrapped around her symmetrical body line; her beautiful golden hair was slack-fluffy waved in a way that looked just like the Yurufuwa Wave hairstyle[1]; and she was the same age as me. She had the same face contour just like her imouto[2] that I had met before, but her large girlish eyes, when blinking, left a completely different impression.

An outstandingly beautiful girl. To be honest, I am surrounded by different beauty types — Liscia, Aisha, Juna-san – so I think I have a rather good eye for this. Even so, just a single glance towards girl could make me think that she is beautiful. Then, this beautiful girl began to speak.

[How do you do, Souma-dono, it is a pleasure to meet you. I am Maria.]

She was the Empire's Holy Maiden, Grand Chaos Empire's Empress, Maria Euphoria.

"Hello to you too[3], Maria-san? I am Souma Kazuya."

[? What's with that way of speech?]

"Nothing, I just wanted to speak like this for some reason."

Her head side-tilting appearance was cute..... it was a foul play.

"I am jubilant for this meeting, Maria-dono, since I had been looking forward to having a nice and long conversation with you one day."

[Me too. Souma-dono's skill had become renowned even in the Empire.]

"Even so, my skills..... are all because of the help of my excellent subordinates."

[You are so modest. Good retainers are something that are gathered under a wise ruler.]



This diplomatic formal conversation continued for a short while. Even without any probing words, I was probing for Maria's nature. Her friendly smiling appearance while talking was the very definition of a pure girl. She was so dazzling, that it made me, who was trying to probe her like this, feel guilty. However, at the same time, I also had a thought: if she is a girl who is "only pure", then she wouldn't have been able to govern the huge Empire.

[By the way, Souma-dono?]

"Yes, what is it?"

[The matter about Amidonia, what are you truly planning?]

Maria was slightly closing her eyes. This alone made her feel more threatening. Even though her lips were smiling, it could be seen that she was considerably angry..... Even so, well, it might be inevitable. Since the matter this time, from the Empire's point of view, was close to betrayal.

[When Jeanne reported the negotiations' result, I was delighted that we could acquire a reliable ally in the east. However, might this all just be my misunderstanding?]

"Even now, we are still Empire's sworn ally. This might be heard as an excuse, but the result this time was a situation that was beyond our expectation."

[So to say, this is not the Kingdom's plot?]

"I wouldn't deny that I had a little plan. However, I never expected that the result would be like this. In all honesty, this situation keeps causing me headaches."

I said this while scratching my head and Maria's anger was lessened.

[Can I receive a detailed explanation?]

"Certainly. Let me begin with stating the summary: the Kingdom, at the very end, had been outwitted by a single girl. Acting with a thorough prediction of the chain of strives, perhaps the person who obtained the most profit, will only be that girl....."



Two months ago, at the time of Van's return to Amidonia (to be precise, it was

one month since the return, this was the report from Black Cat Squad's surveillance about Amidonia's movements).

The Capital Van and its surrounding regions had been returned by borrowing the Grand Chaos Empire's authority, and the first thing that the present Amidonian Duke, Julius, did was to remove the influences that the Elfrieden Kingdom had left behind. The various changes that happened under the Kingdom's reign were eradicated and Van returned to its previous state. Perhaps, Julius couldn't endure the lingering scent from the Kingdom's reign in the Capital Van, which could only be returned by bowing his head to the Empire.

For a stable administration, then the effects of the previous administration need to be cleansed. This policy itself isn't wrong. However, everything has a priority. Naturally, the first thing that needs to be done is to consolidate the foundation. The succession of authority needs to obtain a proper guardianship while the previous ruler was still alive.[4] If they are unable to do so, then they might be scorned as an inexperienced novice by the retainers. Thus, in a country where the dictatorship is strong, this foundation consolidation is important. However, Gaius met a sudden death and Julius was unable to do this step. For this reason, he should have concentrated his entire attention on consolidating his foundation. And yet, Julius put the removal of Kingdom's influence as his priority.

First, Julius made a decree to prohibit people from watching the Royal Voice Broadcast in all of Amidonia. This was the consequence of having the Royal Voice Broadcast Orbs in the Kingdom's custody. Of course, the stalls, that exists because of the Royal Voice Broadcast's viewers gathering, were forcibly demolished (since they knew Julius' character well, all the vendors had disappeared, as a result, Julius could only demolish empty stalls). I wonder how Van's citizens saw the demolition of the stalls in the plaza, considering it already functioned as a market for them.

Moreover, just like what I had guessed, Julius destroyed the bridges on Van's outskirts that had been made by me and had been bestowed with my retainers' names. Well, from a defensive point of view, they should have only stopped at destroying bridges that lied on the Kingdom's attack route to Van, but he destroyed unrelated bridges just because they were "Things made by the

Kingdom", which was a foolish move. The interruption of the transport network was a matter of life or death for the people. For the peddlers and merchants, roads are a property. Whether Julius knew about it or not, what Machiavelli had said not to do since it will incur hatred, "Don't reach one's hands on the citizens' women and properties"[5], he had already done it.

In addition, he didn't give any aid to the citizens, like the emergency food distribution that was performed under the Kingdom's reign, and increased control on public moral, he especially prohibited women from enjoying fashion and prohibited booming art culture that was widespread in Van.....and many others. I heard that the house that had the songstress(Lorelei) drawn on its wall, was torched by the soldiers. With the freedom that had been given to them now robbed away, the citizens of Van began to clamor:

[His Majesty Souma's time was better.]

[When we were the Kingdom's territory, we didn't have to live under this suffering.]

[Even though the children finally got their meals...]

[Why doesn't Julius-sama treasure his citizens more than a foreign king?]

[I wonder if His Majesty Souma can occupy Van again.]

Such opinions and grudging stares were aimed at Van's castle. Well, amongst their resentful complaints, there was something that was not Julius' own fault. In the first place, the Elfrieden Kingdom and the Amidonia Dukedom differed in population, territory size and economic conditions. For the Amidonia Dukedom to give out the various aids that the Kingdom had given out, could be said as unreasonable. However, the common citizens didn't understand this point. So in the end, the more Julius tried to erase Elfrieden's color on Van, the more its citizens drifted away from him.



Then, what about the regions outside Van and its surroundings? In this too, it didn't turn out well. Just like my statement before, since Gaius' sudden death prevented the succession of authority, Julius was disdained by Amidonia's lords. This 'disdain' came in two forms. The first one was "What's with the Ducal

House, why I have to bow my head to that neophyte”, the so-called “looking down at the other party” type of disdain. The other one was, “That inexperienced ruler is not reliable, I will need to fend for myself.”, the so-called “the other party can’t be counted on” type of disdain.

In practice, amongst the Nobles and Knights class in the Amidonian territory, the latter was the majority. To begin with, in a feudalistic system, they devoted their loyalty for the compensation of territories or properties from the ruler. If the ruler didn’t have power to do so, then the retainers must protect their territory and properties with their own hands. Their actions will be not for the ruler’s sake, but for their own.

I had presented Julius with the words from Machiavelli [A country that is obtained with hardship is easy to govern, a country that is obtained without hardship is hard to govern][6]. Sure enough, Julius, who obtained Van easily by borrowing the Empire’s authority, suffered hardship.

Although I had mentioned that Julius had decreed the prohibition of watching the Royal Voice Broadcast, only Van and the nearby regions abided to it. The other regions were like, "A decree from the Duchy Capital has nothing to do with me!", and so they kept on watching the Broadcast (by the way, since I had predicted this, I kept broadcasting entertainment programs to Amidonia).

Since they couldn’t rely on the central government, each city had been gathering soldiers or mercenaries. Considering that at this time, the Kingdom was disbanding the Three Dukes’ Army and the Nobles Army and reorganized them into the United Army, what had happened in Amidonia was the exact opposite of the Kingdom’s situation.[7] The actions of the regional feudal lords gathering their own soldiers wasn’t something that Julius could ignore, but if he rebuked them, there was a risk that the lords would begin to rebel one after another. However, if someone was just looking at the results, this was a chance to clean out all the pus.

Machiavelli had pointed out that this was the time to use[cruelty]. Even if they do rebel, then one should destroy every hostile force and then exercise his authority over the others who were still undecided in their position. However, Julius didn’t use this move. Perhaps he was letting the sleeping dogs lie, or perhaps he feared that his depleted numbers of soldier from the last defeat

would be reduced even more? I couldn't possibly know his reason for this. However, this lack of policy was the first move towards the quagmire that he wouldn't be able to escape from.

One month ago, or one month after Van's restoration, the rebellion of the citizens of the Amidonia Northwestern Region happened.



The impetus for the citizens' rebellion originated from the food shortage. It also happened in the Kingdom, but the food shortage in this region was more severe. Van's northwestern region had been the most severely afflicted region, the number of deaths from starvation had reached the unheard level of several hundreds. The citizens had requested the feudal lord for assistance, but the feudal lord rejected this request. Since to protect the region, they needed to gather soldiers, so the few food that was stored was for the soldiers' maintenance. This feudal lord's reaction was the cause of why the citizens' anger exploded and attacked his mansion.

The soldiers gathered to protect the feudal lord and the territory fell into a situation where they must oppose the angry citizens. Nevertheless, most of the gathered soldiers had been scraping for a living, so when they clashed with the fellow angry citizens, they ended up fleeing in all directions. The scuttling feudal lords managed to reach the Dukedom Capital Van and appealed to Julius for the suppression of the rebellion. If the rebellion dragged on, then the dissatisfaction smoldering in each territory might flare into a flame.

If he showed his authority and force at this time, then the nobles would abide to him. With this judgment, Julius led the regular army and personally embarked to suppress the rebellion. The angry citizens had no means to oppose the regular army, and thus the rebellion was gradually suppressed. The gruesome spectacle where corpses of citizens scattered throughout the rebelling village was widespread in the Northwestern region. Although Julius finally suppressed the Northwestern Region's Rebellion and put it to an end, he received a yet another astonishing report.

During his absence, the citizens of the Dukedom Capital Van revolted and occupied the city. Furthermore, they sent messengers to pledge allegiance to the

Elfrieden Kingdom and appealed for reinforcement, which the Kingdom immediately accepted and had sent out their army. Van and its surrounding regions were once again reoccupied.



[And then, you..... reoccupied Van as the result.]

"That is correct. Since it was an appeal from the Van's citizens."

Maria send a gaze demanding an explanation, so I calmly nodded. Of course, this Van's citizens' uprising happened due to the incitement from the Black Cat Squad led by Kagetora. They concealed themselves in Van's vicinity, and while observing the progression of events, they made connections with influential people of the city, and chose the timing to cause Van's citizens' to riot at their own discretion.[8] The time between the messenger's arrival for allegiance and the reoccupation was so short because I had deployed my army beforehand along the border at the former Carmine Duchy.

[The [Humanity Declaration] stated that it is prohibited to change the national border by force. Van's citizens had revolted and taken the city by force. With this, if Amidonia's border change, then there will be a violation of the Humanity Declaration. If this happens, the Empire, as the leader nation, will need to intervene between the countries once again. The Kingdom that moved its army into Van, too, would be dealt with in a severe manner.]

"Can you?"

Just with this short remark, Maria suddenly kept her silence.

"The [Humanity Declaration]also recognizes the people's right to self-determination. If the citizens of Van and its surrounding regions wished to change their allegiance from Amidonia to Elfrieden, then shouldn't the Empire as the leader of the [Humanity Declaration]recognize them and give them their needed support?"

[.....]

Maria might also understand this. That's why she didn't say anything else. Seeing Maria behave like this, I let out a small sigh and then informed her in a direct manner.

"This is the reason why the Kingdom didn't participate in the [Humanity Declaration]".



《Humanity Anti-Demon Race United Front Declaration. Three Main Clauses》

First, the non-recognition of border change by force due to conflicts between fellow humanity.

Second, to respect the rights to equality and self-determination of all peoples within every nation.

Third, for countries far from the Demon Lord's Territory to support the countries near the Territory which serve as a bulwark against the Demon Lord Army.

Ideally, these were a really praiseworthy clauses. However, there existed a contradiction amongst these three clauses that even the Empire didn't notice. Certainly, if they abided rigidly to these three clauses, then these could prevent a cross-border "external" conflict. However, if it was a problem that happened "internally", then this treaty would make any movement impossible.

By applying this treaty to Van's situation, if the citizens' right to self-determination is to be recognized, the member nation of the Humanity Declaration must recognize the current Van citizens' right to self-determination. However, then this would mean that there was a border change in Amidonia, so they mustn't recognize it. Then, there was also the question of whether or not the independent Van would be considered a member of the Humanity Declaration, so this reasoning wouldn't apply to them. But if Amidonia suppressed the independence that Van wished for, then Amidonia as signatory member nation could be attacked for not recognizing the citizens' right to self-determination. In other words, the member nations of the Humanity Declaration would be cornered into a situation where it is impossible to take any movements.

There might be people who were thinking why the Empire didn't notice this. However, this was something that actually happened and went unnoticed. After all, it was something that "even the 20<sup>th</sup> century earthlings didn't notice".

"Have you heard about the fairy tale in Jeanne-dono's report?"

[..... Yes. Certainly, it was a story about people who were afraid of being dragged into the conflict between two gods and decided on the rules to avoid the war, right?]

The fairy tale was like this: Once, there was the God of the East who said "The world ought to be equal" and the God of the West who said "The world ought to be free"; it was an age where each country who believed in these two chief gods were glaring at each other. The country that lived close to the boundary of the two gods' conflict, created rules together with numerous eastern and western countries so that they wouldn't be dragged into that conflict. Those rules were, as follows.

First, let's stop changing borders by using force.

Second, let's give the right to the people of each country, so they could decide by themselves.

Third, let's be friends and have a cultural exchange between eastern and western countries.

[I had heard this from Jeanne. It truly resembles the [ Humanity Declaration]. I am curious about the end of that fairytale. How did the world fare after that?]

"For a while..... this rule functioned neatly. Before long, the God of the East divided, and so, with the balance of power broken, the state of tension was lifted, and both factions had evaded a total war."

[Then it..... ended up happily, right?]

"Yes, for a time. However, after that, in a certain multiethnic country, there was a certain ethnic group that raised an armed rebellion for their independence. If the ethnic group's independence was not recognized, then it would have violated the self-determination of people's rule. However, if they recognized the independence, then they would have approved the border change by force. This contradiction, forced the countries, who made the rule, unable to take any action."

[Just like the Empire, correct?]



I gave a firm nod to Maria's question. You might already noticed it, but this fairy tale was from Earth's history. The God of the East who said "Mankind ought to be equal" was [Socialism]. The God of the West who said "Mankind ought to be free" was [Liberal Capitalism]. The countries who believed in these gods and glared at each other was the [Cold War-era West and East]. Then, the countries that convened to discuss how to evade the war were the participant nations of the 1974 [European Security Conference] (which become the [Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE)]), and the rule that they decided on was the accord called the [Helsinki Final Act].

The reason why I immediately recognized the contradiction of the [Humanity Declaration] was because I knew about the [Helsinki Final Act] which it resembled. Since, to take a college exam, I also needed to study modern history. That's why I knew that this [Helsinki Final Act], which had given constant results during the Cold War era, had afterward prevented any actions to be taken for the ethnic conflict between the Serbians and the Croatians in the former country of Yugoslavia.

[.....Is this the pitfall of the Humanity Declaration that Souma-dono had mentioned?]

Maria said it with a deploring tone.

"Yes. This pitfall is lethal for a multiracial country like us. That's why, the Kingdom couldn't participate in the Humanity Declaration."

This might sound cruel, but for a country where a single race dominated, like Amidonia, this was not a particularly grave problem. If from the start, the other races' positions were low, or if their population was few, then they wouldn't have had an opportunity for independence domestically. On other hand, for a coexisting multiracial country, this was dangerous. If the national administration was strong, then there wouldn't any problem, but if that administration weakened, then they might consider separation or independence. Even though the present seems to be alright, no one knows about tomorrow. Just like what Machiavelli had said: "One must be prepared for a change of fate." [9]

[This is a painfully true statement. Since our Empire is also a multiracial country.]

..... True. Since the Empire is strong at the present, then it will be alright. At the present condition, where the Demon Lord's Territory came encroaching from the North, there was no place as safe as the Empire, the strongest country of humanity. It was unthinkable that there would be races or nobles inside the Empire who wanted to change this. However, if the administration didn't go smoothly, or if the threat from the Demon Lord's Territory disappeared, then what will happen to Empire who carried the Humanity Declaration on her sleeve?

"Maria-dono....."

[I know. However, this is not the time to drop the flag.]

When Maria said this, she smiled with eyes that held a strong determination.

[Even if this is a path towards ruin, I believe that the Empire is the light of hope for the people who live today. It is evident that to oppose the Demon Lord's Territory, mankind must face it as one. Even if it is only for a moment, the Empire will raise its flag to unite the people's hearts.]

"..... I think I know the reason why you are called the Holy Maiden."

I think that this is a naïve and idealistic way of thinking, but these kind of words can attract people. In time, the day where the harsh reality hits might come, but even so this girl was determined to tout her ideals. It looked perilous, but I also wanted to see it. Such was the charm that this girl possessed.

(Jeanne-dono also couldn't stop her worries, I see.....)

I recalled the general imouto that was more realistic than her sister, but when I did so, I could heard Hakuya's voice inside my heart, telling me with a vein on his head, "Is that something that you can say yourself?"

[I understand the circumstances led to Van's reoccupation. I think that for now, it appears that there is no fault on your side. "Even if, for example, you are doing something in the back.""]

Maria shook her head and said it with a composure. Fumu, it seems that she had suspected the Black Cat Squad's moves in Van's revolt. Why she didn't demand an explanation for this might be because the Empire also had performed the same intelligence operations. The same with Amidonia. Maria then continued her words.

[But, Souma-dono. There is something that I don't understand.]

"About what?"

[Why did the Kingdom annex the entire Amidonia Dukedom?]

"....."

[1]Yurufuwa Wave: <http://www.art-noise.sg/blog/hair-salon-singapore/yurufuwa-waves/> Yurufuwa style is a perm style that is made of very soft and light curls. A portmanteau ofゆるゆる(yuruyuru) and ふわふわ(fuwafuwa).



[2]I don't translate imouto. Just deal with it.

[3]Maria started with "Hajimemashite", the standard formal greeting to meet with someone you first met. Souma replied with "Doumo", which as a greeting was a rather casual. Hence Maria's response.

TRIVIA: Doumo, just like yoroshiku has many use in conversational Japanese. It could be used for greetings, thanks, and goodbye.

[4]In other words: Grooming the Successor/Heir Apparent. Just like Kim Ilsung prepared Kim Jongil to succeed him.

[5]The Prince. *"Chapter XVII Concerning Cruelty And Clemency, And Whether It Is Better To Be Loved Than Feared"*:

"...Nevertheless a prince ought to inspire fear in such a way that, if he does not win love, he avoids hatred; because he can endure very well being feared whilst he is not hated, which will always be as long as he abstains from the property of his citizens and subjects and from their women..."

[6]The Prince. *"Chapter VI: Concerning New Principalities Which Are Acquired*

*By One's Own Arms And Ability" and "Chapter VII: Concerning New Principalities Which Are Acquired Either By The Arms Of Others Or By Good Fortune":*

"...I say, therefore, that in entirely new principalities, where there is a new prince, more or less difficulty is found in keeping them, accordingly as there is more or less ability in him who has acquired the state. Now, as the fact of becoming a prince from a private station presupposes either ability or fortune, it is clear that one or other of these two things will mitigate in some degree many difficulties. Nevertheless, he who has relied least on fortune is established the strongest..."

"Those who solely by good fortune become princes from being private citizens have little trouble in rising, but much in keeping atop; they have not any difficulties on the way up, because they fly, but they have many when they reach the summit..."

[7]While the Kingdom was centralizing her Army, the Dukedom was decentralizing instead.

[8]Remember, Inugami's "the Mountain has moved" report the from previous chapter? That is the code that Julius had left the city. Politics abhor a vacuum of power.

[9]The Prince. *"Chapter 25: What Fortune Can Effect In Human Affairs, And How To Withstand Her":*

"So it happens with fortune, who shows her power where valour has not prepared to resist her, and thither she turns her forces where she knows that barriers and defences have not been raised to constrain her."

## Chapter 06 – In Which I was Baiting Sea Bream with a Shrimp but Caught a Shark C

If you ask why I was blindsided, then I'd have to say because my outlook was too narrow. The eyes of the Black Cats and the Kingdom of Elfrieden were only trained on Vannes itself.

With the relief for the people of Vannes and its environs as justification, we regained Vannes in a way that did not violate the Humanity Declaration. That was the plan. To begin with, even though we did gain substantial funds in reparations in the last war, we didn't believe Amidonia under the management of Julius had the means to pay. Amidonia's finance ministers had somehow disappeared prior to the battle, and there whereabouts were still unknown to this day. The military-first Julius and the people surrounding him would probably be unable to restore Amidonia as it currently is.

Also, due to Gaius' death, transfer of authority was not properly done, and even without anything done on our part, the country was clearly in for some rough times. The lords would have made Julius the target of their scorn, and the people would grow dissatisfied having to be taxed to pay for reparations. If they came to a civil war, they would naturally be unable to pay the reparations.

That was why I acted so as to be able to regain Vannes. This way, even if it turned out that the reparations could not be paid, we could still taste the rewards of being victorious, though as unsightly as it is (since the Carmine and Vargas duchies were dismantled, they would be sufficient for domestic rewards). Regarding the appeal of the citizens of Vannes, they were actually usable when the Empire came and urged their return. We could elect a temporary ruler for Vannes and nudge them in the direction of assimilation with Elfrieden.

But the reason we accepted their return nonetheless was to allow the Empire to take the position of arbiter. If we abused a loophole in the Humanity Declaration and made them accept our takeover of Vannes that day, we would have plastered mud on the face of the Empire. That was why we let Vannes be returned for the time and kept the Empire at bay (making them look good in the

process). This way, the Empire's dignity won't be shaken once we regained Vannes later.

Thus the Kingdom's eyes were only trained on Vannes, but an unexpected situation happened outside it. It was feared that the Kingdom Army retaking Vannes would be met with the Principality's Armies heading straight back ... but in the end, Julius never made it back to Vannes.



When the Principality's army, led by Julius to suppress the people's rebellion, made to return to the re-occupied Vannes, further news came about, lots of them. At the same time the Elfrieden Royal Army entered Vannes, riots broke out all over the Principality of Amidonia's territory.

The details were varied. There were citizens overthrowing the tyranny of their rulers, deposing their lords and took control of the cities. There were great nobles, distrustful of Julius' capability, revolting in order to have him replaced. There were nobles who were grieved at how Julius suppressed the people of the northwest, sheltering the runaway citizens in order to make a show of resistance to Julius. There were nobles from Roroa's faction, raising their armies in revolt due to how Julius disregarded the princess' ideas upon the inheritance of the throne ... and so on. The reasons were wide-ranging.

Among them there were even cities who saw the Royal Broadcasts ran by the Kingdom of Elfrieden and wanted to be incorporated into the Kingdom themselves like Vannes was. What was strange was that despite the reasons being varied, they all happened at the same time as if it had been decided beforehand. Before long, the go board that was the Principality of Amidonia was brimming with the black pieces of the rebels and the whites that were Julius' Principality Army had lost their Liberties <sup>1</sup>, becoming a dead block.

No longer able to know friend from foe, Julius' Principality Army, while still being within the Principality, was beset by enemies on all sides (naturally, since they were within their own country). Now that they had fallen into this situation, they were unable to fight the Royal Army nor suppress the rebel armies. Deserters appeared from among the Principality's Army as it was relentlessly chased down by the rebel armies. In the end, the Principality's Army was

scattered and Julius took along a small number of retinues to find refuge in the Empire.

Thus Amidonia was temporarily broken up and devoid of a ruler. From the Kingdom's point of view, we were able to regain Vannes and eliminate a hostile nation. Though unexpected, the current situation was everything we could've wished for and then some. *Current*, that is, until the breakup ended soon after, nay, it *was ended* soon after.

Because Amidonia's enemies came and invaded.



Those that moved were the Holy Orthodox Empire Lunaria in the north and the Commonwealth of Torgis in the south (the Mercenary Country of Zem in the west did not put in any pretense of invasion due to permanent neutrality but it is believed that they supplied mercenaries to both countries).

The Holy Orthodox Empire Lunaria was the holy see of the Lunaria Orthodox Church that worship the moon goddess Lunaria, a theocratic country whose Pope manages all affairs of church and state. The Lunaria Orthodox Church, together with the Faith of the Mother Dragon who lives in the Star Dragon Mountain Range, were the two great religions of the continent. Their faith called for benevolence, fraternity, and forbearance, but there are those among the most zealous believers that possessed an ideology of denunciation of other faiths. It was similar to Judaism, Christianity, or Islam on Earth (incidentally, having adopted freedom of religion, Elfrieden could be treated as a polytheistic state).

That Holy Orthodox Empire Lunaria, in regards to the current conflict, sent their armies to their borders with Amidonia under the cause of protecting the Lunarian Orthodox believers within Amidonia, taking a posture to protect the refugees from Amidonia and if need be, to march into Amidonia in order to rescue said believers. However, with regards to their movements themselves, they were slow. This was probably due to the fact that Royal Armed Forces had been deployed around Vannes and they wanted to avoid conflict with us.

As of the present, the ones that had already crossed the borders were the Commonwealth of Torgis in the south. The continent gets colder the further one

went south, and at the southernmost tip, the Commonwealth of Torgis was a frigid land. The southernmost peninsula in particular was covered in ice and snow for half a year round, with turbulent winds overhead that would even ground wyverns. It is said that not even the Empire in its heyday was able to lay a hand on such unrelenting nature. The country's army ride on Yak-like creatures that could only live in the country, becoming a fighting force unmatched in cold lands.

The fact that the Commonwealth of Torgis had come to invade the country quickly spread throughout the Principality. The Principality was currently uncoordinated and they could take whatever they want from it. Were Torgis to go north, Lunaria would also start to move before they could mount a response. If that happened then Amidonia would crumble and be split apart.

Fortunately, the Torgis Commonwealth Army's advance was met with a hard fight by the Lord of the southern fort city of Nerva, the veteran old general Hermann. Having come to the conclusion that, rather than being split apart, they would rather leave the country whole in the hands of someone they could rely on, the people of the Principality recalled the bright expression of the King on display over the Royal Broadcast. The young King who managed to govern Vannes without problems and even appoint the Principality's loyalist general Wanda.

... that is to say, me. Before I knew it, Amidonian public opinion had converged on having me merge Amidonia and oppose Torgis and Lunaria. In the process, those who wanted Amidonia independent (actually, those who started revolts in order to supplant Julius) were eliminated by the Mergerists. The fact that the general stalling the Torgians at Nerva, Hermann Bach and the former finance minister Gatsby Colbert, having gained the trust of the people by his support through the economic difficulties, had co-signed their support for the Mergerists was huge.

And thus the petitions for merger coming from all over Amidonia reached me. ... hm, it was like, how the hell did this happen!? Comparing the plus and minuses of annexing Amidonia, turns out the minuses were bigger. The plus points were the increase in population and the strengthening of national power in the long term. Amidonia was rich in mineral resources, granting a safe supply of minerals



not available for mining in the Kingdom.

The minus points are that just when we finally managed to solve the food crisis in the Kingdom, we had to confront the one in Amidonia. That ruling will be difficult since we were enemies just until the other day. That our borders will be longer, where we once only bordered the Eastern Coalition, Amidonia, and a bit of the Torgis Commonwealth, we lost the Amidonian border only to gain ones with the Mercenary State of Zem and the Holy Orthodox Empire Lunaria (politics gets harder the more countries you have on your borders). Also, there was the loss of the yearly payments, though we weren't really counting on it in the first place.

Looking at it that way, it's obvious that there were more demerits to merging Amidonia. However, we don't have the choice of saying 'no' now. The reason was because the reasoning of 'there were more demerits to merging Amidonia' would shake our cause of 'annexing Vannes into the country due to the request of the people of Vannes'. If we allowed Vannes' entry and denied the others, we would be talked about behind our backs, "what, so they only wanted to take the land they desired after all."

Also, if we left Torgis' and Lunaria's invasion alone. We would end up having borders with them anyway. Furthermore, ruling an Amidonia wracked by food difficulties was hard. If the two countries failed in their management and caused famine or internal wars in the former Amidonian territory, refugees would have flowed into our country. In that case, it would've been better to take care of them all to begin with. It would be difficult right now, but if we take a long term view, I'm sure we could regain the capital. Sheesh.

In the end, I decided to allow the merging of all of Amidonia into the Kingdom, and declared such to foreign powers. At the same time, we moved the navy forces under Excel that was stationed in the south of Elfrieden along the borders with Torgis, ready to assault at any moment. From the Commonwealth's point of view, they would be anxious that their home country would be invaded while their lords were out attacking Nerva, and immediately began their retreat. They left Amidonia like the falling tide.

Furthermore, Lunaria, who had stationed troops along the borders, called off their war preparations after having seen Amidonia unified. They, unlike Torgis,

made no big moves, and thus we couldn't discern much about what they were thinking, which was disconcerting.

But anyway, it's about the particulars of the Amidonia merger now.



A little while after the withdrawal of the Torgis Commonwealth forces, I came back to castle Vannes in order to decide how to deal with Amidonia after the merger. Today, in order to acknowledge the services of the ones who defended against the Torgis Commonwealth forces, I was sitting on the throne in the audience chamber. Due to the suddenness of the matter, I didn't bring too many personnel with me, but as usual, Liscia and Aisha were standing on either side of me, and Hakuya managed the ceremony on his own.

Today, the commendation goes to two men. Hermann Bach, who defended Nerva from the invading army of the Torgis Commonwealth, and his co-signer of the putting together of the fractured Amidonia, the former finance minister Gatsby Colbert (Gatsby if I called him by name, but since he was a former finance minister I suppose I should call him Caulver).

Hermann was a long serving general in the style of Georg and Owen, while Colbert was a thirty something intellectual looking man. Behind them, there were two big piles of something covered by a shroud, so I couldn't see what was in them. Seems like they were gifts for me. I said to the two waiting on the carpet, "it's ceremonial", and first addressed Caulver.

"Lord Colbert. You did well to unite the people of Amidonia. Without your influence the confusion would have lasted long, and the people of Amidonia would have fallen into deeper misery. Allow me to thank you on behalf of the people"

"Your words are too generous for me"

Colbert made a deep bow as he said so. Though I nonchalantly talked about the people of Amidonia like they were mine, there was no reaction. Well ... I suppose it's to be expected given how he wanted to push everything onto me. Caulver then said

"Incidentally, Your Highness. There is something I want to offer you"

He then uncovered the shroud on one of the big piles. What came out from underneath were bundles of documents piled up like mountains. "I see," muttered Hakuya on the side while smiling wryly. I don't know what he "saw" but I asked Colbert.

"And this is?"

"Amidonia's earnings call documents and papers related to privileges. They formerly belonged in Vannes' archives but for fear of losing them in the fires of war, I had them taken away before the war started. Now that the war has ended I thought I should return them to the capital"

Ah, now that he mentioned it, when we took documents from Amidonia's archives for collateral, each and every document of that sort were reported missing. So that's what Hakuya's wry smile is for. It's got to be a load off his shoulders for him.

"I see. These are indeed magnificent gifts. Ruling will be much easier"

"I am honored to receive such praise"

"However, these should be returned by your own hands"

"Eh?"

Colbert was struck dumb at me denying to receive them. Humm, can it recover a bit with this. With a grin on my lips, I said

"Former Minister of Finance of the Principality of Amidonia! Do you wish to work under me!"

"Y, yes!"

Colbert replied almost entirely by reflex. Yosh, he could talk again.

"Very well. Then I will restore you to your former post in Amidonia. From now on you will be Elfrieden's Minister of Finance, endeavor to support the finance in this new country"

"B, but I'm a person of Amidonia ... will it be alright?"

"I do not mind. To put to use anyone that can be of use, that is the way of Elfrieden now. Were I to be picky over origins or nationality, I could never have rehabilitated the nation"

Actually, I wanted to have this kind of talent. I'm a liberal arts person so I'm not too good at calculating or judging finances (though I do have a lead over the

typical person in this world). I would do anything to have a person with the capability to draw up a military expenditures budget in a not-at-all wealthy Amidonia and still not bring the country to an economic collapse. With a capable Minister of Finance to cut down on unnecessary expenditures, the budget might just allow for “this policy” or “that policy” that I hadn’t been able to apply until now. Yes, the dream widens.

“Finance Minister of the Kingdom of Elfrieden, Colbert. These documents will be as tools for you to work with. Take it back, and work for the sake of the territory of Amidonia”

“Y ... yes! I will do as you ordered!”

Colbert prostrated himself again. I nodded, and then turned to Geneal Hermann next.

“Lord Hermann, you too have done well to defend against the armies of the Torgis Commonwealth. Without your efforts the Commonwealth armies would have passed through Nerva and eaten into the lands of Amidonia. Were that to happen, help from our country would not have made it in time and cause an even greater strife than what we have now”

Though being thanked like that, Hermann’s grim expression did not soften.

“Soldiers are protectors of the people. The lack of a Lord hardly matters. This one was merely doing this one’s part”

S, so stiff .... He’s like the *worker* type of guy who’s loyal to his work. If Owen was a ‘Gahaha-gramps’ he’s more like an ‘Obstinate gramps’. Humm, it’ll be a much better impression if I take him as an Japanese olden-day tsundere gramps. Let’s mentally translate his line into “i, it’s not like I’m doing this for you, okay! It can’t be helped that I have to protect them because there is no lord!”

Then Hermann arose and stood in front of the other heap covered in a shroud.

“This one too wishes to present a gift to Your Highness. This one wishes that Your Highness take it and not mind about giving something back”

Then Hermann took of the shroud. What appeared from underneath was a pile containing fabrics in various colors rolled up like roll cakes.

“Amidonia’s south is a land for keeping sheep and spinning fine wool. These

are woven from that wool. This one wishes to give you this in offering”

“Ooh ... can I take a closer look”

“As you wish”

I stood up and approached the pile of fabrics and touched one of them with my hand. Mm, feels good. This one, is it a carpet? I don’t really get it, but I can somehow tell these are fine goods.

“Hm? Carpet?”

A gift carpet .... I somehow feel like I’ve heard a situation like this before. If I recall correctly, there was a scene like this in Earth’s history ... !?

“Say, Lord Hermann”

“Yes?”

“I don’t suppose there’s a girl wrapped in one of these carpets?”

The moment I said that, Hermann’s face stiffened. Eh, for real!? Then, one of the textiles in the pile started wriggling. Whoa, is there an assassin there. But just when the guarding soldiers and Aisha began emitting killing intent,

“Oh waily waily. It’s supposed to be the surprise of a lifetime, why did ye find out”

The wriggling rug unrolled itself and a high school age girl came out from inside. Wearing her long hair in two bundles at around her neck, the twin-tailed girl had a shapely face and big cute round eyes. The girl, calling herself Roroa put her right hand to the back of her neck and her left at her waist, and twisted herself in a pose like a model.

“Though I’m not called I jump out anyway~ Tadaah~♪ It’s Roroa~!”

“Ufun♪”, said Roroa coquettishly. She’s slightly shorter than Liscia, and because her curves weren’t too prominent, she just seemed like a young girl forcing herself to look like an adult. W, well, she looked like a small animal doing this, and if you asked whether she’s cute, well, yes she was. Anyway, Roroa, isn’t that the name of Julius’ little sister!? Then while I was struck dumb by the suddenness of the situation, Roroa hmphed sulkily.

“Whut? Ye can’t follow the mood, Soma-*han*?”

“Soma-*han*!?”

Wow, that's the first time anyone ever calls me *-han* ... wait, this isn't the time for that. Eh, why is it that both Gaius and Julius were scary dudes with killing intent but this girl's all friendly going? Doesn't the Royal house of Amidonia have a grudge on the Royal house of Elfrieden? Then, Roroa patted my shoulders.

"But I'm impressed that ye can see through my surprise. I was in there for an hour straight ye ken? ... aye, it's hotter than I thought"

Well, you were wrapped in a wool rug ....

"So how did ye figure it out? I was sure I wouldn't be found out"

"Well, there was a woman who did the same thing back in my world" <sup>2</sup>

"Ugh, she spoiled it! Blunder~"

"As an aside, I heard that she did it buck naked" (\*apocryphal)

"Whut's the deal with that woman. She a pervert or something?"

"Well she's still one of the great people who was said to have changed history by the length of her nose..." (\*opinions vary)

While looking at Roroa hugging her meager chest away from view, I breathed a sigh. Anyway, Roroa was wearing proper clothes. If she weren't I'm sure we wouldn't have so quickly gone on to having this kind of conversation. After all, two of my future wives were looking from behind me.

"Um, ... Roroa, can I call you Roroa? You're Amidonia's young princess, right?"

"Aye. The beautiful, intelligent, water-dripping rock-drilling bishoujo of Amidonia, Roroa-*chan*, that's me"

"Aaaah, sheesh, I don't know which one I should riposte first ..."

"'Riposte'? I wonder what 'post' you're talking about and where you want it 'posted' in me? ... blush♪"

"You're not supposed to *say* 'blush'! Also, stop it with the dirty jokes!"

"Nae can't do, we just met each other, aye? Let's first begin as spouses?"

"Going for the goal right away! You're supposed to start as friends first!"

"You two ... how do you get along so well on your first meeting"

While I was exchanging banters with Roroa, Liscia looked on with cold eyes. Right! For some reason, Roroa was rolling with laughter.

"That's a good riposte, Soma-*han*, good riposte~"

"How are you taking this so lightly. Are you really Amidonia's princess?"

“Aye. I suppose I should give my proper greetings?”

With that said, Roroa straightened her expression and made a respectful bow.

“I am the daughter of Amidonia’s Former Prince Gaius VIII, Roroa Amidonia”

Seeing such actions of hers, she strangely looked like a real princess.

“... and what does this Princess Roroa want to have come to this place?”

“Ah. Well, about the reason ...”

“Dropping formalities already!?”

“There’s no need to mind that stuff, aye? After all,”

Then with a beaming smile on her face, Roroa dropped the biggest bomb of the day.

“I’ve come to offer Soma–*han* my hand in marriage♪”

1. TN: In Go, Liberty is an empty square adjacent to a block of same-colored pieces. When a block of pieces has lost all its liberties, they are removed from the board. ↩
2. TN: For a hint of irony, he was referring to Cleopatra hiding in a rug to get through Ptolemy to see *Gaius Julius* ↩

## Chapter 06 – In Which I was Baiting Sea Bream with a Shrimp but Caught a Shark D

“Hold on a moment!”

As I froze upon hearing Roroa’s sudden marriage proposal, a flustered Liscia ran down and pressed on to Roroa.

“You’re Amidonia’s princess, right! What are you saying!”

“Whut do ye mean whut? The same as you, big sis”

“Big sis!?”

On the other hand, Roroa was still at ease.

“Big sister Liscia is Elfrieden’s princess too, aye? The reason fer ye to marry Soma-*han* was at first to give him a case to govern Elfrieden, no?”

“H, how did you!?”

“Dinnae be underestimanting merchants. And then I’m the same. By marrying me, Soma-*han* gains a case to rule Amidonia. He’d somewhat lessen the chance of rebellion by the people”

“Well ... yes, but even if it’s that way in the beginning, but I’m now completely doing it to support Soma’s rule. There’s my feelings for him too. Not just for giving him a case. Me, Aisha, and also Juna, we all chose to stay by Soma ourselves!”

Being sort of confessed to so loudly made me, who was listening from the side, feel embarrassed. However, even having listened to Liscia’s proclamation, Roroa said with a grin,

“Ah—, naught a problem then. I like Soma-*han* plenty myself.”

that easily.

“Back when I was sheltering in Nerva, I saw the Royal Broadcast. That was revolutionary I say, and there’s still a lot of uses for it, too. Ye could make a fortune depending on how ye use it. Let’s see ... both the Kingdom and Principality have Purveyors, aye? The one where the highest quality items they present gets a seal of approval from the government? That is simultaneously a



guarantee of the quality of the item and publicity for only the guaranteed goods. So what about taking just a wee bit of time on the Royal Broadcast to publicize these goods for a fee? Big merchants who want to publicize their goods will be willing to spend a lot of money for it I think.”

“Ah, I see. You want to air commercials”

That was a blind spot. Currently the Royal Broadcasts were airing public broadcasts. I haven’t thought much about commercials at all. Because I didn’t think that the idea of becoming a TV sponsor exists in a world without TV. But just like Roroa said, there are merchants like Purveyors who do trade by publicity. They’d be willing to part with money if we gave them a place to advertise. Using that for programme production costs would help lighten national expenditures.

As I was thinking, Roroa flashed a grin.

“Soma–*han* looks like ye could bring both Elfrieden and Amidonia together to a more prosperous era. I think there’s going to be a lot of fun things if I stay with ye. I’ve always thought that it’s better to marry someone fun”

“Roroa ... are you sure you’re alright with me?”

I looked Roroa straight in the eye. This is something I must ask of her.

“I’m the man who killed Gaius ... your father”

The air froze as I said so ... or so I felt. Unexpectedly however, the only ones who are tense were people from the Kingdom. Roroa only calmly shrugged.

“If ye’re going to say that, then I’m the one who drove out brother. I used the merchant’s network to cause many riots to happen at the same time”

Ah ... so the simultaneous riots really were this girl’s plan.

“About Lord Faither, ye neednae lose sleep on him. Or would ye prefer a girl who glares at ye saying ‘how dare ye kill my faither!’ ?”

“Um, it’s not about preference ...”

Seeing me baffled, Roroa breathed a sigh.

“... well, not that I didnae feel anything. He’s still my faither after all. But, he was also going to kill ye as well, aye? A battlefield is where ye kill or get killed.

That is something that cannae be helped anymore. Ye've also kindly returned his body, so there's nought left for me to say"

"..."

"Well ... it only shows how much we dinnae get along that I only felt this much."

Roroo said with a somewhat lonely look.

"Lord Faither and brother were so obsessed with revenge to the Kingdom, they couldnae see the reality. Amidonia is a poor country. We have mines, but that's all we have. We're also not food sufficient. The ones to make the people suffer isnae the Royals or the people of Elfrieden, but hunger and poverty. What we really need are jobs and food. We, that is me, Colbert, and the officials, desperatly tried to raise money, but Lord Faither puts them into army spending right away"

"..."

"We managed to reduce the number of people that are starving, the girls selling themselves off, the children who had to be sent away. Fueling hatred for the Kingdom to suppress dissent isnae healthy. Someday it's going to fail. But even so ... Lord Faither never lent us an ear. I wonder when it began ... when did I stop thinking of him as family ..."

"Roroo ..."

Roroo shook her head, pulling herself together, and made a grin.

"My family is already old man Hermann and 'big brother' Colbert, and also the uncles and aunties living in town. The ones I want to protect isnae the family only connected to me by blood, but the ones important to me"

She wants to protect not the family only connected by blood, but the ones important to her. Back when we negotiated post-war arrangements, Julius cast Roroo away, thinking she would become a political opponent. And now, Roroo is also abandoning Julius. It should've been even, but somehow, I felt more filial piety in Roroo. Probably ... unlike Julius, Roroo understands the importance of family.

"One more thing. The insurrection in north-western Amidonia the other day, causing Julius to come cracking down, is that also your instigation?"

"I'd never do something like that!"

For the first time since Roroa was here, she was angry.

“In fact, I made it so that the rebellion happens at the same time to avoid that. Rendering brother immobile so he dinnae oppress the masses”

“So the insurrection in the northwest happened on its own?”

“That’s also wrong. Judging by the location, what’s near the northwest where it happened? Was there anyone who acted strangely?”

“! Holy Orthodox Empire Lunaria!”

The Holy Orthodox Empire Lunaria was to the northeast of Amidonia, and they sent troops to the border in order to take care of their believers within Amidonia. Roroa made an annoyed look and nodded.

“Religious affairs go beyond borders. Being so close to the Holy Orthodox Empire, that area had lots of Lunarian believers. The Orthodox Empire probably instigated the believers with a papal commandment. They dared send in troops and call it protecting the believers”

“But the northwest isn’t a prosperous land, right? What would the Orthodox Empire gain from it so much as to cause an insurrection there?”

“Whut they want isnae land, but people, believers. True believers, no matter how much they suffer, willnae latch away from the Holy See. Troubles and hardships are a trial from the gods. Therefore the country never has to think about the people’s well being. They get support so long as they observe the rites. That’s why the country is happier the more believers they have.”

“Nothing quite as troublesome as that, huh ... speaking of which, you sound like you really don’t like the Lunarian Church, Roroa”

“I dinnae care about the Church itself. Whut I hate is the bastards using religion for politics, filling their own pockets while causing suffering.”

Hmm, I guess mixing religion with politics does cause trouble no matter what world you’re in. You’re using something that was supposed to heal people’s hearts as justification to do what you want. Interpretation of dogma is left to the powers that be, condemning people under the name of god for being heretics, for not espousing the same creed as themselves. Really, there’s nothing quite so troublesome.

“I’d rather avoid having anything to do with any of it if I could”

“But ye cannae do that, aye? That country’s going to contact you eventually”

“Why!? I’m not a believer”

“Because that country detests the Star Dragon mountain range and the Grand Chaos Empire”

The Star Dragon mountain range is obvious. It is the (de facto) country of intelligent dragons, and the faith of the Mother Dragon that inhabits it is one of the two great faiths of the continent along with the Lunaria Church (though it’s unknown what they believe in the Demon King Territory). That’s why the Orthodox Church would obviously detest the Star Dragon Mountain range, being the seat of the faith of the Mother Dragon.

“Ye ken that the Empress Maria is called the ‘Holy Maiden’, aye? The citizens that were saved by her relief policies called her that on her own. In the Lunaria Church, the right to name Holy Men and Maidens belong to the Pope. The Lunaria Church actually has someone they call the Holy Maiden. Which is why to the Orthodox Empire, Lady Maria is someone who sullies the title of Holy Maiden.”

“Since it’s the people who called her that, Lady Maria did nothing wrong, right?”

“They dinnae care. A religious country seeks charisma over everything else. It’s a slight on their honor for a Holy Maiden to just spring up on her own. Which is why after absorbing Amidonia and expanding your power, ye cannae expect the Orthodox Empire to leave ye alone. They’d try to probe you out somewhere. They may even slap a Saint title on ye and drag ye along in their fight with the Empire.”

Uwaa ... it’s scary how *likely* that is. The secret alliance with the Empire, with it being secret and all, cannot be publicized to other countries (in fact, since it would be a problem if it were ever found out, both countries’ intelligence bureaus work around the clock to keep it under wraps). I have seen how the Church stabilized their own influence by giving the powers that be a spiritual position, back in the histories of Earth. They could possibly start calling us Holy Elfriedenian Empire and set us up to head the fight against the Empire.

But that said, it’s not easy to just antagonize them. The problem with religion is that even when you crush their home base and kill their leaders, their believers will remain. The more you suppress the believers the more united they become, and the leaders you killed will be revered as martyrs. Furthermore, most of these

believers are common citizens. It would be just short of a genocide to eradicate all believers. I can't join or antagonize them. Seriously, such a pain.

Wincing back from the bad imaginings, my shoulder was stroked by Roroa, who switched the topic.

"Well, let's leave the matter about the Orthodox Empire for now. What ye should decide now is about our marriage"

"Uuuh..."

"Soma-*han*... Do ye want me, or do ye not?"

A straight-ball question. A pair of big round eyes looked straight at mine, looking like the puppy from "What to do, Aifol?" <sup>1</sup>. Well, since you asked like that, then the answer is obvious.

"I do"

There were just too many benefits to marrying her I desperately want to reach out and grab her. Firstly, marrying Roroa would reinforce the legitimacy of the Amidonia merger. Secondly, she was attractive from a personnel point of view. She had the economic foresight to come up with a source of revenue in advertising, and independently establish a mercantile network. It was also well that she understands the tricks that nobles use, which is something that Hakuya and I had overlooked. Both she and Colbert are talented people I want to have at all costs.

Furthermore, I have a good impression of Roroa's way of thinking. Her downtown merchant spirit, or rather, the way that even when she's a realist that screams "The world, it's money!" she was still aware of duty and humanity. The money she earns for the people, she uses for the sake of the people, even though it didn't come to bear fruit thanks to Gaius' actions. She had the guts to butt heads with her own brother for the people she cares about. To top it off, there's nothing to complain about having such a cute girl wanting to marry me. If there's a problem ... that would be what Liscia thinks. She's the princess of a longstanding enemy country, after all.

"What do you think, Liscia?"

"If Soma thinks she's necessary, then I'm okay with her"

Said Liscia, bluntly. I couldn't see any ill feelings in her face. What's weird was that she was slightly miffed as if saying, "what's that look for?"

"She looks like a capable girl to me as well. I think she has what it takes to be received as a Queen Consort. If Soma would manage inheritance rights later, then there's nothing more for me to say."

"Liscia ... thank you."

"Naturally, you'll still care for the rest of us, right?"

"Naturally."

Really ... such a good girl. I'm really glad about having Liscia as my ... fiancée. Roroa then interjected with a somewhat good mood.

"Ah, sorry for barging in on your sweet world for two, but ye dinnae have to worry on that front. I dinnae care about the crown"

"Really?"

"Aye. ... in return, there's something I want to ask of ye, Darling."

*Darling?* ... well, okay. Roroa then looked up at me with upturned eyes and a face like a child begging for something.

"Something you want?"

"Ye see, I always wanted a company of my own"

"Company?"

"Aye. Ye see, Darling, I wanted te see how much I can change the country with the money I earn for myself. Your policies have foresight, but they canne meet the budget every time, right? You'd have it hard to spend treasury money on high risk or seemingly useless things, aye?"

"Well ... you're not wrong."

Now that my authority had gotten stronger, I can easily assign budget on things that I can explain the merits of relatively easily, like road construction to improve the circulation of goods, or building a new city, but on the other hand, it's hard to budget for things whose effects cannot be seen immediately or that are seemingly meaningless. Like for instance, funding for specialized research. Experts can understand "We can't be left in second place," but non-experts aren't likely to understand.

"And so, if ye have some measure that ye want to take and dinnae have budget

for, ye can talk to me. I'll back ye up with the money I earn from the company."  
"That's ... reassuring, but are you sure? For a Royal Consort to be doing a merchant's work, you're going to look as if you have no authority to the people."  
"I've thought about that too. I'll be working behind the scenes, and leave the front to ... let's see ... the owner of the Silver Stag Shop in Vannes I'm friendly with, Sebastian"

Sebastian of Silver Stag Shop <sup>2</sup> ... ah, the one Juna and Tomoe went to. The name left an impression on me, like, doesn't it sound like a butler's? Then that means the 'really cute small racoon type client' he was talking about would be Roroa. Well, he sure did seem like a reliable, nice middle-aged tradesman. He'd have what it takes to represent a company.

"Um ... if I may have a word as someone entrusted with the treasury."

Colbert cut in with a difficult look on his face.

"What's wrong?"

"If you have that kind of money I'd rather have it in the treasury, but ..."

Ah, yeah. I get what Colbert is saying. The Kingdom was at the brink of bankruptcy until recently, too.

"" But I refuse! ""

"Why are you two suddenly in sync!?"

"It's fine. It's something I'll be earning with my own skills"

"It'll be much easier for domestic affairs if we have the budget for it, too"

"But Your Highness ..."

"Now now, I willnae be wasting it away like Lord Father did, see. This is what ye call division of labor. I'll be earning, and ye'll be saving. Then everything will be alright."



The later setup of King Soma adopting extraordinary policies, Roroa providing financial support out of amusement, and Colbert counseling him against it, had now been established. They both support King Soma in financial affairs, but due to the difference in their statuses, they would each come to be called Arsonist Roroa and Extinguisher Colbert.



Then Roroa slithered up to me and wove her arm around mine.

“And then when a child is born to Darling and me, they will go on to succeed the company. Since they’re my child, they probably won’t be interested in the crown.”

Well, sure, a child born to “I want to live in peace” me and “I hate boring things” Roroa and took to our personalities wouldn’t want to be a King, what with it being a lot of work. ... speaking of, I suppose the only ones who’d be willing to inherit the throne would be “I will do my duty” Liscia’s children maybe? “Musselbrain? Can you eat it?” Aisha and also “Ufufu” Juna would be like “It’s better to be able to move freely,” and hope to be side queens.

... Is this going to be an inheritance war? People fighting because they *don’t* want to inherit? I have to make sure Liscia works hard and give birth to a successor with a good sense of duty if I’m to avoid this. Though, if I asked her directly she’s going to get mad at me and say “don’t act like it’s somebody else’s problem!!”

“Sebastian got himself a daughter not long ago, if we had a boy then we could have him marry into that family, but if we had a girl, well, let’s think about it later”

“You’re moving too fast! Actually, will you get your hands off Soma already!?”

Liscia tried to pry her off in a fluster, but Roroa used my body as a shield and clung to me alternating between my left and right hands.

“Aw don’t be so stingy big sister. Ye’ve been all lovey dovey with Darling all this time, aye? Let me have this bonus turn”

“We haven’t! We’ve been so busy we didn’t have time for things like that!”

“Really big sister? Could ye actually be *still* ...”

“Yes I’m ‘*still*’! Got a problem!?”

As Liscia said that in a frenzy, Roroa turned towards me with eyes full of cold.

“Darling ... that’s ...”

“No, hold on ... (why the hell is the blame on me now!?)”

“That’s right! This happens because Soma won’t *take care* of things *properly*”



“Well, that’s, umm ... (They’re teaming up!? Is this *that*!? The appearance of a common enemy!?)”

“Um ... I, uh ... would like you to *take care* of me *properly* too”

“Ugu ... (*Et tu, Aisha*!?)”

(Ufufu)

“Huh!? ... (D, did I just feel the hand of someone who’s not here on my shoulders just now!!?)”

In the blink of an eye, I was wrapped in the rowdy mood of my four (?) fiancées. Cold sweat dripped unstopably from me, and the retainers watched resignedly with wry smiles.

Several days later, the Principality of Amidonia had merged into the Kingdom of Elfrieden, becoming a new country, the United Kingdoms of Elfrieden and Amidonia, or Friedonia Kingdom for short. Since around this time I had come to be called the Great King who expanded the territory in under a year, or the Great King of Friedonia. I don’t think too fondly on this “Great King” title, it gives me the impression of a squid or an isopod or something ... aaaaalso ...

Since I took the princess of Amidonia, Roroa as my wife, there were rumors that “King Soma becomes stronger (territory expands) every time he gets a new wife” or “He’s a lecher that even overthrew an enemy country because he wanted the princess (Roroa).” Sheesh, how did it turn out like this ...



One thing led to another and thus it came to the top level conference between Lady Maria and I over the Royal Broadcasts. I had just now finished explaining to her how the Amidonia merger came to be.

“... and that’s what happened”  
[That’s really ... no ... pffft]

On the receiver set, Lady Maria was covering her mouth and her shoulders were shaking. Sounds like it tickled her funny bone. Still, since it was officially a conference site, she held herself back (and she looked cute doing *that* too). Though I thought it would be better if she had laughed out loud.

[Fufufu ... Lord Soma, you sure can put one’s mind at ease]  
“Yes. It looks like I caught a shark when I was fishing for bream with a shrimp”

[Do take proper care of the fish you caught, okay]

“I can’t really release them now, can I?”

Maria continued to chuckle for a little longer, but then regained her serious look.

[Now, about the Lunaria Orthodox Empire’s manoeuverings ...]

“According to Roroa, they disliked that you have taken the name of Holy Maiden”

[That is true. They requested many times that I don’t call myself Holy Maiden ... protested, actually. But even so, I wasn’t the one calling myself that, so there’s nothing there for me to do]

“It would be weird if you tell the people not to call you Holy Maiden, after all. ... in that case, the Empire would continue to be a latent danger the Orthodox Empire. They might try to come in contact with me just like Roroa said”

[Lord Soma, don’t you think you’re ... throwing away the Orthodox Empire’s authority?]

She was trying to probe me with that question, so I answered with a clear shake of the head.

“Please don’t joke about that. I’m trying to lead the world into a new era here, spare me the theocracies”

I don’t need a Girolamo Savonarola in my country. Lady Maria seems reassured by my clear denial.

[The Empire also considers the Orthodox Empire a big headache. There are a lot of Lunarian believers in the Empire, as well, so the Humanity Declaration have no power against religious groups. In fact, I fear they might make use of the loophole Lord Soma pointed out.]

Something like, the religious groups within the country declaring independence. Once the religious adherents grouped together they’d be hard to eradicate. They’re more likely to blow up the more they were put under pressure. The only way for her to handle them would be to round up those who scheme for independence before they could form up into groups, or maybe throw away the Humanity Declaration and promptly attack and destroy the Orthodox Empire.

“Will the Empire still not renounce its leadership of the Humanity Declaration?”

[No. Humanity can't afford not to stand together at a time like this. There needs to be a flagwaver for that, and the duty falls to the Empire. The Orthodox Empire should understand that as well. If humanity fought with one another and the Demons came in and destroyed us, then it will all be for nothing. I do believe they won't do anything rash at this time.]

“... I wonder about that.”

I don't think it's a problem you can look at with that kind of optimism. The more chaotic the times are, the more religion shows its true worth. The reason was the hearts of the people who wish to 'be saved'. Despair caused by society and the times drive people towards religion. Nowadays, with the threat of the Demon King Territory, some people had already thought of this as the end times. If this despair were to be allowed to run rampant, it will become food for the Orthodox Empire, leading to them gaining incredible power.

In order to avoid that ... we need to show the people a ray of hope. We need to have the people believe that the world will not come to ruin, that tomorrow will come no matter what, and that the coming future will be something greater than today. For that ...

“Lady Maria”

[Yes]

“So long as you, the Grand Chaos Empire, espouse the ideal of humanity becoming one, then we, the Kingdom of Friedonia will walk alongside you.”

The Empire ... Maria, is the ray of hope for humanity. In the meantime, the Kingdom will steadily advance the progress of the times. For humanity to not lose hope. For us to rise up by ourselves without having to cling to the divine even in despair.

“I believe that if we cover for each other, we can deal with anything that may happen.”

[Yes. I wish, if I may, that this oath will continue on for eternity]

If one continually looks up towards an ideal, one will stumble on the rocks by one's feet.

But if one were to only look down at reality, one will lose sight of the path to one's destination.

That is why we walk together.

The two of us looked at each other's face through the screen and smiled.



«Elfrieden Classical Idioms Course»

[To catch a shark while baiting sea bream with a shrimp] ... proverb. Meaning to catch a shark with a lot of untasty<sup>3</sup> parts as one tried to use cheap shrimp to catch valuable sea bream. Denotes the disappointment of having something unexpected happen when one tries to expend the least effort for the greatest result. Furthermore, since even untasty shark has valuable shark fin, it also denotes the fact that there was something good that came along with the disappointment. Similar idioms on Earth would be “Don't count one's chickens before they are hatched” for the former, and “Jewel in a dunghill” for the latter. King Soma uttered this phrase upon being disappointed that he had to merge the whole of the poor lands of Amidonia when he wanted to only annex Vannes (and as for the latter, the shark fin would surely be Princess Roroa).

TN: It's election day and I can finally have some time to finish this up! Apologies for going missing all this time. Funnily, one of the candidates in my area is the incumbent governor who is being sued for blasphemy for saying what Roroa and Maria is saying in this chapter: that political opponents are using religion to take him down and further their own agendas. It only proves his point IMHO.

1. TN: A series of commercials from Aiful corp. featuring this guy here ↩
2. TN: Yukkuri has “Silver Deer Shop”, but I like the added alliterative appeal. ↩
3. TN: Apologies but I think that damn ~~mimie~~ doppleganger is rubbing off on me. ↩

## Epilogue – In the Middle of the Snow A

This world has eight days in one week. Then, there are four weeks in a month, so every month has 32 days. Since there are twelve months in a year, a year will have 384 days. The ninth month to the eleventh month will be autumn and the twelfth month to the second month will be winter, just like in Japan. Today is the thirty-first day of the twelfth month. On Earth's calendar it would be called Oomisoka(New Year's Eve)[1], but in this world's almanac, it was just the last day of the year.

In this country, it was normal to quietly celebrate the New Year's Eve and New Year with one's family, so, excepting the Priest that managed the New Year's ritual, the Castle normally wouldn't be that busy (since the government's year's end was on the first day of the fourth month[2]), but currently there were chaotic commotions in the banquet hall of Parnam's Castle.

"Aisha, carry that set to the right."(Liscia)

"Roger, Prin-..... Liscia-dono."(Aisha)

Following Liscia's instruction, with a "humph", Aisha lifted up the stage set that needed several people to lift it and carried it on her shoulder. By the way, since they had become fellow Queen Consort candidates, Aisha came to call Liscia as『Liscia-dono』. Though, sometimes Aisha slipped and called her princess.

"Carla, Hal. Please line up two of those prop pillars here."(Souma)

"As you wish. Master."(Carla)

"Right oh, right oh... Humph."(Halberd)

Just like what I had instructed, Carla and the Assault Captain of the EDF[3], Halberd, fixed the Parthenon-like marble pillar (fake) objects at the floor. Afterward, together with Liscia, I took out the blueprints in my hand while promptly giving out instructions to the subordinates (& fiancée).

"It's not just the EDF, to even put the future queen to physical work is too surprising."(Ludwin) "It will be unthinkable in the other countries, nodesu. Aside from that, Hal, do your work quickly nodesu!"(Kaede) "I am!"(Halberd)

Behind us were the Commander of the Royal Guard Knights that guarded the venue, Ludwin, and his adjutant, Kaede-chan. I turned back to look at them and waved my hand.[4]

"Oh well, Aisha herself said that she wanted to help. Also, it's a fact that there is no one in this castle that is stronger than Aisha."(Souma) If there is an indoor crane, it would be easier, but that kind of thing doesn't exist here, so we could only rely on pure muscle power. So there was no reason to let Aisha's physical strength be left unused. Liscia, who stood beside me, made a sigh.

"Good grief..... If you said this much earlier, then we wouldn't have to end up with a schedule this tight....."(Liscia) "It can't be helped. Since the idea came to my mind just one week ago."(Souma) "It's amazing that everyone immediately decide『Let's do it!』to that idea."(Liscia) Well recently, it feels as if the brakes had been broken. With Roroa and Colbert's admission, the finances had improved and the "the acquainted talented person from Ludwin's connection" had also begun to show their real ability (I will tell you about that person later on a different occasion)[5]. Perhaps because of the implementation of various novel policies, Friedonia's citizens themselves also had a tendency to prefer unconventional mysterious things, it looked like they were brimming with inquisitive spirits. It was a Japanese-like-artisan spirit, or to be precise:"If you do something to the extremes, even if it's useless, it's art"-type of feeling.[6]

Therefore, one week ago, when it came to my mind and I casually made a remark about it, 『Oh that reminds me, it's already at the end of the year. If it's the end of the year, then it will be"Red and White singing contest"[7], right?』

.....It's not like I want to it to be performed. At first, Roroa, who happened to hear it, replied,"lick. This reeks of profit.",[8] so I ended up explaining to her about the『Red and White singing contest』. Curiously, Juna-san also got pulled into the talk,"We also want to show our real ability", even the Loreleis(Song Princesses)Pamyu and Nanna, and the general-turned-singer, Margarita, also showed a lot of interest in it, and before I knew it, it had become a situation where I couldn't just say,"Nope. Nothing!"

When I became aware of it, the songstresses of the Singing Café『Lorelei』(it already turned into a talent agency[9]), the participants of the『Singing Contest Program』held at Van, and many others had already gathered, and the planning

scope had become quite big. Since it was already a crash program from there, the preparation for it was advanced forward by an ad hoc approach. Well, in this way everyone did something to complete it, so it was fun, just like a school's cultural festival, but because of that, the works didn't decrease, right....

Amongst the troubles was the『White』part of the White and Red singing contest. Starting from Juna-san, the Red Team (female singers) was glamorous and thick with style, but the male singer had a thin impression. Since they were mostly country singers, the songs they sung were mostly only the folk songs of this world. Imagine if in the Red and White singing contest, there was no one from Johnny[10], only Enka singers[11]..... Then, there wouldn't be any charm to it, right? For that reason, the male Idols, who had been rather lukewarm compared to the『Loreleis(Song Princesses)』until now, the『Orpheuses(Song Knights)』[12], would participate in the grand-scale battle.

"Now then, Song Knights, assemble!"(Souma)

""""Yes(OU)! [13]""""

When I called out, three young men, that were standing by on the sides, assembled. Amongst them was a tall silver haired twenty-something year old man who made a salute while reporting.

"Song Knight Unit『YAIBA』, present at the post!"(Ax)

He was a human from Van and the leader of this Song Knight unit『YAIBA』, Ax Steiner[14]. He was an eye-soothingly impressively handsome man(ikemen), but perhaps because he had such a formal way of talking (a common feature of Amidonian men) that it felt like such good looking features were wasted instead. Hearing Ax's greeting, a frivolous-looking striped-haired tiger-looking young man, who looked the same age as me, made a wry smile.

"Geez, Leader, it ain't good to be too formal. Yea agree, right Kukri-cchi?[15]" (Kotetsu) "I think that your speech is also too informal, Kotetsu-kun."(Kukri)

The frivolous-looking young man was Kotetsu Bry[16] from the tiger beastfolk race, and, while we are talking about it, the handsome boy(bishounen)(?), who looked like a middle-school student no matter how you looked at it, was Kukri Carol. You might have realized it from his surname, but Kukri was the twin brother of the Song Princess Pamyu Carol. To every appearance, he was a shota

amongst the unit's member, however, he was the oldest between the three. As expected, the youthling race is frightening.[17]

These three people were the members of the first Friedonia Kingdom idol unit『YAIBA』. The unit name originated from the fact that the three had bladed weapon-like name, so I decided on the name immediately, plus we didn't have that much time to spend time on the name. Since Hal's name also was weapon-like, I thought about turning him into a member, but the person himself firmly refused. I was told by Kaede-chan, "Hal has got quite a voice, but he is tone deaf nanodesuyo." I clapped my hands.

"YAIBA will have a rehearsal as soon as the set has been completed."(Souma)  
"Yes! Will it be fine if we are the ones who do it first!?"(Ax)

"Since I want to test the stage's strength first, this time, the only entrant composed of multiple people who will sing while dancing will be just be you three. If the stage can handle you three, then it will be fine to be used by the others."(Souma) "Yes! I will obey!"(Ax)

As always, Ax replied very formally, and then he headed towards the complete stage, the other two followed him while making strained laughs.

"Aw man, why is our leader so stiff like that?"(Kotetsu)

"Perhaps he is nervous? Or possibly it was his personality from the start?"  
(Kukri) "Hey you guys! Be sharp!"(Margareta)

""*Hii!*""(Kotetsu)(Kukri)

Suddenly being yelled when they were walking slovenly, their backs jolted with shivers. When they timidly turned around, they could see the grim-faced Margarita in a bright red dress standing. .... Her appearance was gorgeous, but with that dress, her impact had increased by three times. Only by being red.[18]

"You guys are Friedonia's face! Straighten your back magnificently!"  
(Margareta) ""Y-yes!""(Kotetsu)(Kukri)

"If you understand, then go! Double time!"(Margareta)

""W-we will obey!""(Kotetsu)(Kukri)

Margarita was someone who became a general in the male-dominated society



of Amidonia. So with her menacing look, both of them ended up replying in an Ax-like style and ran towards the stage. It was like a drill instructor working with new recruits. While I was thinking this, Margarita noticed my presence.

"Y-your Majesty. I am sorry for making you see this embarrassing event."  
(Margareta) "Ah, I don't mind. Since they are a group with strong personalities, it's really helpful since you are managing them. However..... That is a splendid appearance."(Souma) "This is..... I slipped out from the fitting session."  
(Margareta)

"Slip out?"(Souma)

"Oh, there ye are. Ye can't run away in the middle of fitting session, ye know Mar-chan?"(Roroa) "P-princess!?"(Margareta)

Margarita made a shriek-like yell when she turned around and saw Roroa rushing towards her with wide smile plastered on her face. Then she smoothly clung onto my hand.

"Darling. I also had done me best. Praise me, praise me!"(Roroa)

She put her cheek near my shoulder and rubbed against it while saying those words. It was more or less feel like an action of a small young animal..... but well it's cute, right? Actually, without Roro's financial cooperation, this project wouldn't be able to be done. I then patted Roroa's head.

"Good job. Uumm, you are amazingly helpful. Thank you, Roroa."(Souma)

"*Mufufu~*"(Roroa)

"You have received the word of thanks, so you should be satisfied enough, right? Since we are in the middle of work, please move away."(Liscia) Liscia picked up Roroa's lapel and then tore her off from me, as if she was moving a hindering playful kitten away. Roroa also followed the mood and replied,"Nyan♪".[19]

"I know about that. Mar-chan, follow me. We are still in the middle of the fitting session."(Roroa) "By fitting session, you mean that red dress?"(Souma)

When I asked, Roroa laughed daringly.

"*Mufufu~*Just wait for it. The real one will pluck yer guts."(Roroa) "I object

Princess! Please, please just spare me from that."(Margareta)

"Since it's already an order, just accept it."(Roroa)

"No way! 18 meters is no way!"(Margareta)

Roroa was dragging Margarita away, who was losing her composure in a never before seen degree. Even Margarita, who can make men cry with her thunderous voice, was no match for the Amidonia's Princess, Roroa. I still don't know much about the balance of power in Amidonia's camp.

"Or rather, what's the thing about 18 meters?"(Souma)

"It's the length of the dress."(Juna)

The one who answered my question was the Song Princess, Juna-san. Since she will be doing rehearsal after the Song Knights Unit『YAIBA』, she came to this place.

"Dress?"(Souma)

"Roroa-san proposed it, she said "since it will knock the audience senseless"..... Taking Margarita into her plan, she would wear a tremendous 18 meter long dress. That dress has been sprinkled with the light algae used in the street lights, so it produces light that is dazzling to the eyes."(Juna) "..... What to do. If this becomes a yearly custom, then I could see that in the future it would become very gaudy year by year."(Souma) Although, I had thought of her as the Big Boss of the world of show biz, she was more like the Last Boss..... I had planned got her to sing『Snake Eater (Japanese Version)』[20], but perhaps let's change it to "Together with the wind." [21]. Then, I noticed that there was one girl hiding behind Juna-san. It was a girl that looked to be about 15–16 years old. She was cute, but there was no piercing feeling from her. That girl had "The Class' Madonna" or "A girl you wanted to be your childhood friend" kind of feeling.

"Juna-san. Who is this girl?"(Souma)

"Let me introduce her, Your Majesty. This girl is Komari Colda-san [22]. She has been trainee at the singing café『Lorelei』up until now, but I planned for her to debut in this singing contest."(Juna) "Ko-Komari Colda! Nice to meet chu!" (Komari)

With a magnificent slip of tongue, Komari bowed her head very deeply. While making a wry smile at the nervous Komari's behavior, Juna-san added some words for her.

"This girl has a promising singing voice and obediently practices with zeal. I believe that she will metamorphose into an outstanding singer in the future."  
(Juna) "Oh really? That's so amazing."(Souma)

"N-not at all, far from it! For me to surpass Juna-sama, it's too much for me!"  
(Komari) After I saw the panicked Komori trying to be humble, I thought, 'ah, I see.....'. This girl's appeal might be her ambience of immaturity that made people unconsciously want to support her. It was a charm that was unlike Juna-san who had already matured. Then, when she had matured, she might become a Song Princess that could move the entire Kingdom's entertainment world. She was a talent who I would love to see how her future will turn out.

"Ah, Juna-dono, Komari-dono. So you are here."(Colbert)

Then, Friedonia's Minister of Finance, Colbert, came. For some reason, the cat-eared beastfolk, Nanna, was on his shoulder, while standing behind him, the youthling Pamyu was tugging on his sleeve. How should I say it..... The scene was just like that of a father and his daughters.

"I see that they have become quite attached to you, Colbert."(Souma)

"Though I might say that this has been imposed on me by Your Majesty....."  
(Colbert) Other than his position as Minister of Finance, I also asked Colbert to become these girls' fund manager (+ various other procedures). At this moment, the country underwent a 'Lorelei(Song Princess)boom'. Especially for Juna, Nanna, and Pamyu, who were the top Song Princess, the amount of money that moved around them was in such tremendous degrees that they couldn't deal with it personally. Excluding Juna-san, who was a candidate for Royal Consort that resided in the castle, Nanna and Pamyu were both commoners before becoming Song Princesses, so it could be dangerous if they held that much money.

For that reason, I asked Colbert, who was well versed in financial matters, to manage these girls' funds, and also for him to do various tasks like selecting bodyguard personnel for the girls (chosen mainly from the female members of

the EDF) and other tidbits. So, in other words, he was the manager for both Nanna and Pamyu. That's why, I knew that there were many occasions for the girls to meet with him, but I was wondering why they had been following him around like this. When I asked this to the people in question, "Since he treated me with a meal! Eating lots of fish is good!"(Nanna)

"After the meeting, Colbert-san will treat us to a nice dinner. In doing so, he didn't treat me like a child and treated me just like a lady."(Pamyu) .....were the answers that I got. So it's baiting with food! Well, in Pamyu's case it was a bit different.....

"Colbert, if you want to put your hands on them, do it when they are bigger."(Souma) "I won't!?"(Colbert)

"But it looks like I can't become bigger than what I am already....."(Pamyu) Pamyu's expression looked like she was sulking. S-sorry for what I had said.

"T-the four of you want to have a rehearsal, right?"(Souma)

"Yes. After the members of YAIBA, the next turn will be our's."(Juna)

I looked at the group mentioned by Juna-san, the YAIBA trio was singing『Hero』[23]enthusiastically. Yup, as expected, it was the coolest song. The cool handsome men(ikemen)(there is one cute-type mixed in, though) singing a cool song. What a perfect combination. By the way, the trio also sang『Race Against Time』[24]and『Fantasy Boys』[25]. The choice of songs all tended to be Ultraman songs, but it was because of my lack of knowledge about male idol groups, so as the result, for now I tried to emulate Project DMM (cause you know, they are a male trio unit).[26]

"Everyone, we have brought the meal."(Serina)

"I-It's just simple made riceballs and sandwiches. Of course, we also have napolitan bread, yes!"(Poncho) "Nii-sama, nee-sama. It's meal time."(Tomoe)

While we were watching YAIBA's rehearsal, Serina, Poncho, and Tomoe-chan came with the maids corps behind them. Everyone carried large baskets in their hands. Perhaps they were filled with riceballs or bread. Then, they put them on the long table and everyone hurriedly gathered around.

"Oh, it looks delicious. Can I really eat it?"(Halberd)

"Hal, please clean your hands properly desuyo."(Kaede)

"Carla-san. Please prepare tea for everyone."(Serina)

"Ce-certainly, immediately, Chief Maid!"(Carla)

The surroundings became lively with chatter, I watched it all absentmindedly.

"The number has increased a lot....."(Souma)

"That's true."(Liscia)

Though, they were just words I had said unconsciously, Liscia happened to hear them. As I awkwardly turned my face towards her, she was smiling widely.

"The people that Souma has gathered and the people who gathered around Souma, before we realized it, it has become a large family."(Liscia) "..... On the contrary, I feel happy about this, so no need to worry. It's just that the people I want to protect has increased."(Souma) "What are you saying?"(Liscia)

Liscia put her hands at her sides and puffed her chest up.

"I believe that the people that you want to protect, also want to protect your reign. That's why..... The people you want to protect, will surely protect you." (Liscia) ".....Is that so?"(Souma)

"Exactly."(Liscia)

Liscia made a powerful assertion. It was a mystery how we got to this situation.

"I see..... Now then, Liscia. Can I leave this place to you for a while?"(Souma) "I'm fine with it..... Where are you going to?"(Liscia)

"There is someone that I need to meet for a bit. Look, Hakuya has come." (Souma) When we looked at the entrance, Hakuya was entering the room.

"Then, I will be leaving for just a moment."(Souma)

"Yeah, just leave this place to me."(Liscia)

With Liscia seeing me off, I left the banquet hall.

[1]Cultural notes!<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/%C5%8Cmisoka>. Ōmisoka (大晦日?)—or ōtsugomori (大晦?)—is a Japanese traditional celebration on the last day of the year. It's a very big day in Japan and considered an important day where family gathers around and they visit the temple for the ringing of the temple bells, which is going to be sounded for 108 times. The modern world festivities of New Year's Eve is the Western culture equal.

[2]Also called Fiscal Year. Not surprisingly, Japanese Fiscal year begin in 1 April.

[3]Actually 国防軍, or Defense Force. which is the short form for Elfrieden Kingdom Defence Force Army (エルフリーデン王国防衛軍). Just like what I had mentioned in Arc 3 Chapter 5A: any further mention of 国防軍 will be translated as EDF. However, since the country already became Friedonia United Kingdom, perhaps it should be FDF? Also <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n5qfWt1ACBw>

[4]In Japan, hand waving is a gesture used to display confusion or that the individual waving their hand does not know or understand or agree with a statement.

[5]There is no hint about the gender on the Japanese RAW.

[6]If you see a Japanese game show, you can see how many people do useless things to the extreme. Just google TV Champion for an example.

(E/N: don't forget the infamous crotch hitting game show. <https://youtu.be/fA4PxJkthOY> It was so infamous that it was parodied on an American TV show. <https://youtu.be/LeBYenU5ntU>) Oh yeah... This is one of reasons why you shouldn't nuke a country twice.

[7]紅白歌合戦 Kōhaku Uta Gassen = [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kōhaku\\_Uta\\_Gassen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kōhaku_Uta_Gassen) If you don't know about this, you are not Weabo enough.

[8]She licked her lips or fingers, not Souma's. Although that would be fine, too....

[9]You know, like the one in Idolmaster! Or if you know KPOP, a company similar to JYJ or SM Entertainment.

[10][https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johnny\\_&\\_Associates](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Johnny_%26_Associates)A famous talent agency in Japan [11]<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enka>Which considered to be a genre deeply rooted in the traditional music and considered to be people's music, just like how the Country genre is in USA, the trot genre in Korea or the dangdut genre in Indonesia.

For KPOPers. Imagine if in Inkigayo there is no one from SM or JYJ or any boybands / girlgroups, only trot singers.

[12]歌姫= Song Princess is how a songstress/diva is called in Japan. It is also Lorelei's other name. As its counterpart 歌騎士= Song Knight or Orpheus. I don't know why it is Orpheus, perhaps because these handsome Knights will charm you with a pleasant dream? It looks they went with the Strong Muscled Male Boyband type. (E/N: It's because Orpheus was a famous Greek musician & singer whose skills were so great that he charmed the King & Queen of the Underworld & persuaded them to let his dead wife be revived. It was also said that his music was so beautiful that when he was attacked by jealous women, their sticks & stones that they threw at him refused to hit him. His music was even stronger than the song of the Sirens.

<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orpheus>)Oh that's make sense.

[13]It is read as YES, but spoken with a OUGH! (Masculine way to say Yes)

[14]Yaiba is one of the spelling for刃 which means: blade/edge. Alsoアックス=シュタイナーAkkusu Shuteinaa. What a masculine name, Axe of Stone! Sounds like a good band name.

[15]-ツチ(-cchi)like -リン(-rin) and -たん(-tan) are mostly suffixed to the name of a someone to create a really informal/familiar/intimate nickname. Calling someone "Ai-tan" instead of "Ai-san" implied that you are really close to "Ai".

[16]コテツ=ブライKotetsu Burai. Oh... boy... the degree of the pun in the name is painful..... First Kotetsu came from虎徹, which is the name of Nagasone Kotetsu, the famous blacksmith. His namesake on any swords were used in many famous Japanese pop culture sword name. This name suits Kotetsu in the story since the虎kanji means tiger and he is a tiger beastfolk. Also his surname: Bry,ブライ, could be written as無頼 which means a scoundrel/ruffian/hoodlum, which explains his very familiar/informal tone of speaking.

[17]Youthling is a子人(kohito — child-person), a parody of how dwarf is written on Japan小人(kohito — small person). Both子and小can be spelled as“Ko”

[18]Shout out for Char. His custom red MS is said to be three time faster than usual.

[19]I like Nyan better than Meow.(E/N: <https://youtu.be/QH2-TGUiWu4>)Btw... This is my phone ringtone... Since I can't put my “Onii-chan denwadayo” as a ringtone on the hospital.

[20]Opening song from Metal Gear Solid 3: Snake Eater.  
<https://youtu.be/8C9niRuUb5g> A great James Bond-like opening Song... Also, see the reference to Big Boss?

[21]風といっしょに, a 1998 song from Kobayashi Sachiko, the Ending song of Pokemon the First Movie <https://youtu.be/Pvzpy7rvAKM> Man, I feel so old now... I saw that movie when it was first released back then, you know...

[22]コマリ=コルダKomari Koruda ... wait... Komarikoruda?困り子るだ?

[23]Hero or英雄is a song from the Japanese group DOA and the Opening Song of Ultraman Nexus. <https://youtu.be/hip3e4wxzoQ> . I must admit that the lyrics are rather cool sounding and the song is quite catchy.

[24]時の中を走り抜けてfrom Ultraman USA (an Ultraman animated movie from 1989) <https://youtu.be/G7ZvUw-t4k> [25]空想少年is a song from Ultraman Legend, part of Ultraman Cosmos <https://youtu.be/G8Sx9bMsDzs> [26]Project DMM is a Japanese musical group that primarily performs theme songs for the Ultraman series.



## Epilogue – In the Middle of the Snow B

I walked down the corridor with Hakuya. Looking through the window, I can see it was already completely dark outside. The time is, around eight PM by my guess, and I recalled the situation at the banquet hall. If such a perfect situation happened at this kind of hour ... we'd have been going to be up all night tonight. I would've had to send the performers back early to rest. Otherwise, if they had to perform all night and collapse during the show ... I don't even want to think about it.

As I walked along with such thoughts in my head, I finally reached my destination. Hakuya smoothly gave way for me before the door to the room, standing with his back by the window across from the door. This was where he intended to wait. Though it's not as if he was prohibited from entering, but he refrained. He then clasped his hands in front of himself and gave me a respectful bow.

"The Black Cats are already standing guard. Please take your time and have a pleasant discussion"

"Sure"

I nodded as I opened the door and let myself in. It became dark again as soon I shut it back. Inside the candle-lit dark room I could see a king-size bed and beyond that, a terrace, lit by the blue-white light of the moon. Seated at the glass table by that window were the people I was looking for, having tea. As I drew close, they put down their cups and swiftly stood up.

"My, Lord Soma. It has been a while"

"Long time no see, Your Highness"

I then returned the greetings back to the pair.

"Indeed it has, Lord Alberto, Lady Elisha"

The people waiting for me were Liscia's parents, the former king, Lord Alberto and his queen, Lady Elisha.



“Please”

“Thank you very much”

Once I took the tea I was offered, the former Queen Elisha gave a wide smile. She had Liscia’s calm demeanor, and more ladylike, a coquettish-looking lady. I wonder if Liscia’s going to turn out like this. I’ll be looking forward to the days to come.

We were now sitting around the glass table with me seated across Lord Alberto. Lady Elisha silently stood behind Lord Alberto, having finished offering us tea. Looks like she intended to play the waitress through and through tonight. ... now that I think about it, I never really had a talk with her, huh. Even though she’s my mother-in-law, she always spoke sparingly, preferring to stay next to Alberto with a warm smile. According to Liscia, she was always the quiet, taciturn type.

“We welcome you and thank you for coming tonight”

My thoughts were interrupted by Lord Alberto.

“Also, congratulations on the war and merger with the Principality. You’ve done so much after only having the crown for half a year. You sure have lived up to the title of Great King”

“I’m not really too fond of that title ... but I suppose I can finally meet with you now”

“We apologize for making you wait”

The former king Alberto said that with a bow of his head. I have asked to meet with Lord Alberto time and time again until now. When it was ‘I don’t know anything,’ I was looking for cooperation in order to get the Three Dukes to cooperate and to persuade Castor who was worried with the sudden abdication. When it was ‘I have made judgement on everything,’ I asked to see him again and again to seek his explanation.

But the answer he gave me back then, was always ‘This country is yours now, It’s not my place to appear and say anything’ for the former, and ‘I will tell you everything one of these days, please wait until then’ for the latter. Since he said he’ll ‘tell me everything soon,’ I could do nothing but wait until then. After all, I’d

never know if he'd tell me the truth if I brought him for questioning.

And then tonight, he said he'll tell me everything, so here I am.

"So you'll answer everything now?"

"If you want us to"

"... Will you please tell me clearly already. Just what in the world are you thinking"

Since he said he'll tell me everything, I asked from the beginning.

"There are three things I want to ask you. Firstly, about handing the throne to me. It was the first time meeting for the both of us when you summoned me, and yet you handed me the throne after just hearing my *rich country strong army* plan. You even made Liscia my fiancée. It's true that I could act freely because of that, but ... it's unnatural. It was your first meeting with me, someone so young, and I was even bluffing back then so that I didn't get swallowed by the flow so I thought I acted a bit rude. How could you hand the throne over so easily to such a guy?"

"....."

"Secondly, about Georg's loyalty. He plotted a simultaneous kill with those that look like they would become my enemies by putting everything about the former General Georg Carmine through the mud. Seeing how it turned out, it seemed like he had it all planned, even though there's also those letters from Liscia. This is also weird. I never even saw Georg face to face until it was all over. He literally put his life on the line for this. He would never have done it if it weren't for trust and loyalty."

"....."

"But I've never met with Georg, and you don't put faith on someone you never met with before. So Georg acted out of loyalty, but to whom? There's no other answer but the former King, you. Before I 'executed' him, I asked Georg about it, and he said, 'you will hear it from the person's own mouth when the time comes'"

I paused there and took a sip from my tea.

"... and lastly. Why didn't you let me see you until now? If you were waiting for everything to settle you could've seen me when the Amidonian war ended or the

merger concluded. Why were you waiting until now to let me meet with you? I want to know that too.”

“... and that’s everything, is it?”

“You get the gist of it. I’ll ask about the details as you explain.”

“Understood then”

Alberto nodded and began talking.

“Firstly, we would like to say that all those things are linked together by one thing”

“One thing?”

“We will answer the third question before we get into that. We were waiting and seeing, whether to tell you the answer, or whether we should keep things as they were and not tell you anything ...”

“.....”

“... however, our heart is not so strong as to keep the sin we had committed bottled inside our chest”

Sin he had committed? What’s he talking about?

“Lord Soma ... have you ever thought about wanting to do your life over?”

Lord Alberto asked the question. Albeit suspicious, I still answered.

“... I have. I always have”

Speaking of just the things since I received the throne, I’ve always thought whether I could’ve done things another way, whether I could’ve done it better, and whether I could’ve saved even more lives. It’s always been said that dead souls go to heaven, so I wondered if I could’ve reached an understanding with an enemy I slew dead in battle, even though I knew it was impossible.

“But, what’s that got to do with this?”

“... let me tell you a story, about a certain kingdom in a certain world, about a certain fool of a king”

And with that prologue, Alberto began telling the story.



There once was a King of a certain Kingdom. The King wasn’t wise, though

neither was he a fool. He did not govern well, though nor did he govern badly ... for he was the very model of mediocrity. Were the kingdom running on its tracks, he would've been said to be an unblemishedly good King. However, the world was in a state of war between men and demons. The flames of war had yet to reach the kingdom, but food and economic troubles were slowly bringing it to ruin. The mediocre King was unable to put up any effective act to counter those problems.

Then one day came an appeal from a great country in the west, that the kingdom perform a Summoning of a Hero. An appeal though it was, it was not one they were given an option to refuse. The mediocre King performed the ceremony as was asked of him. The ceremony was a success, and a young man was summoned from another world as a Hero. The King was going to deliver the young man to the great country in the west, but then the young man said,

“If you’re going to fight the demons you should first have a rich country and strong army”



I think I’ve heard that one before ... or rather, that’s obviously about me, right? I thought about it and considered asking, but the plot that followed differed from the one I knew.



Having listened to the young man’s story, the King felt a talent in him that he didn’t have, and put him as his country’s prime minister. The young man worked hard with all he had to meet the King’s expectations, conducting various innovations. Because of his efforts, the country began to show the signs of recovering from the food and economic problems. However, there are some who looked unfavorably towards the young man.

They were the nobles of the country, the ones among them with ill repute. They could not stomach a young man from heaven knows where suddenly becoming prime minister, but what angered them most of all was the young man’s reforms. In order to raise funds, the young man exposed their corruptions and even threatened to demote them from the upper rungs of society. Because of that he had earned their ire. They came over again and again to the King to

persuade him that the young man brings harm, to try to overthrow him.

However, the young man also had an ally. He was the General of the country's Army. The honest General recognized the genuineness of the boy's capabilities and became his backer. However, this was also seen unfavorably by the unjust nobles, slandering him even more strongly. The slander that kept coming day after day gradually made the King feel uneasy.

The young man's talent was indeed fascinating, but he had too many enemies. This may end up splitting the country. Thinking so, the King naturally made a decision he should never have made. He dismissed the young man from his post as Prime Minister. The young man, released from his responsibilities, fled in disgrace under the roof of the General's castle. *It may be unfortunate for the young man, but this way the country would stay whole. This way the young man's life would surely be safe,* rationalized the King to himself.

But matters did not end there. The unjust nobles were more obstinate than the King thought. Rather, considering their covert connections, it should probably be better said that they could not overlook the young man. That year, the neighboring country that had long nursed their grudge on the country brought their troops to cross the borders. The General sent his men to ambush and square off against them.

It happened at that time. As if they had been waiting for that moment, the nobles staged an uprising, striking at the General's castle in Randell. ... considering the timing, the nobles might have had connections with the neighboring country. Since the General's land used to belong to the neighboring country, their scheming would have been easy, and to the neighboring country, it was an act so as to cut down the young man that might one day become their enemy. Even though it was the town where the Army General's castle was at, most of the Army itself had been dispatched to the border, leaving less than five hundred as guards to oppose the nobles' armies that numbered over ten thousand.

The Army General was also in town and staked his life on the town's defense ... but the enemy was too many and he was defeated in the end. The town his castle was in went up in flames, and the young man turned into scattered ashes amidst the flames. It only took a few days since the nobles' armies were raised,

the King could not do anything.

Having lost the General, the Army could not hold itself facing the neighboring country's army and was routed. The nobles' army met up with the neighboring country's army and used their momentum to march up to the capital. Seeing this development the King rushedly tried to gather the army to face them ... but was unable to do so. He did end up leaving the General and the young man to die, so the army officers and men resisted and returned to their own lands. The Air Force and Navy also turned their backs on the King to defend their own territories.

As a last resort, he tried to raise partisans from the citizenry, but it also came to naught. The young man's reforms gained the ire of the nobles but the people had been saved by those reforms. For the people, the young man was their benefactor, who saw them through hard times. The people had no love for the King who had dismissed the young man. Thus the King ended up just like the young man, isolated and friendless, surrounded by a large army. He would soon surely be killed just like the young man was, the only difference being that the King did not have someone like the General who would risk his life for him.

This ... was surely his just desserts. For believing the false charges of his enemies, and for disgracing those who actually had their hearts for the country.



I was struck dumb by the story Alberto told. The story describes another *reality*. Back when I was just summoned into this world, I mentioned the rich country strong army proposal to avoid getting extradited into the Empire (I didn't know the truth of the matter back then). I thought, if I could be left with the position of Prime Minister or Finance Minister, I could raise funds and deliver the support money the Empire wanted.

But if I had become a Prime Minister instead of a King at that time, I would've met with this fate, the future that was different from my here and now. There were lots of points of this story I could recognize, feeling strange real and not at all a pipe dream. I thought it was a rather accurate simulation. ... in that case, this may be a little impolite, but Alberto was a mediocre person and not someone who could concoct such an accurate simulation.

“... You sound like you’ve actually seen it happen”

“Indeed we have seen it happen. Ah, we suppose we should say ... it was *shown* to us”

“Shown?”

“Yes. Through the power our wife possesses”

His wife’s power? I instinctively looked towards Lady Elisha, who was smiling.

“You know that our wife is a user of dark attribute magic just like you, right?”

“I’ve heard of it, but Liscia didn’t seem like she knew the details.”

“This is highly restricted information, so please don’t mention it to anyone. Her power is to ‘plant memories on a target in the past’”

Then Alberto proceeded to tell the ‘continuation’ of his earlier story.



The King, having lost everything and even his days numbered by the nobles, fell into deep regret. Why did he dismiss the young man. Why didn’t he regard him more highly. If he hadn’t believed the nobles’ slanders, if he had joined hands with the young man and the General, continuing the country’s restoration, at the least he wouldn’t have met with such distress.

Someone of worse character would, at this point, have been blinded of their own faults and blamed everything on the acts of the summoned young man, that none of this would’ve happened if he hadn’t come. However, though the King was weak, he was at his core a soft-hearted person, such an idea did not come to him.

What he did think was that he should’ve given the young man more freedom to move. For starters, he should’ve been given the throne instead of just the Prime Minister’s seat. That way he might’ve managed the country way better than himself did. That way ... his daughter ...

The King sunk in despair. Seeing him in such a state, the Queen said:

[You have made mistakes, my dear, and brought an end to our lives. But with the use of my power, you could ‘convey this failure to your past self’]

The Queen had a mysterious power. One that could tell her past self of her current experience. Her past self that received her memories would experience



the sender's memories, it was like rewinding time itself. By the use of this power, the Queen had survived the quagmire that was the power struggle (strictly speaking, sending back her memories before she died and thusly avoided danger)

Then the Queen apologized to the King.

She had also used this power when she chose her spouse, but for some reason, no matter how brave the man she chose, and no matter how learned, the country was always fated to fall to ruin. There were various causes, such as foreign invasion, the demon war, nobles' insurrection, citizens' uprising, the capital would always end up in flames. Only the current, mediocre King, though he could not make the country grow, he could at least make it survive. She even only managed to bear a child to this King alone.

[There is no way to change our fates now, but there is a way to lead our past selves to a future different to our *now*. My dear ... now that our lives are forfeit anyway, won't you build this future as your final act?]

The King made up his mind. He will convey his failures to his past self, and his past self would turn the throne over to the young man. This might have been just an act of self-satisfaction, but it was to somewhat atone for those who have felt loss due to his actions. Thus the King and the Queen let their past selves inherit their current memories.

The moment they received the memories was the moment the young man was summoned, when they listened to him talk about his rich country strong army plan.



"In other words, we were the King who received those memories"

As I listened to the King, I became shocked to the core. Is this a time slip? ... no, a time leap? Magic can even do things like that? ... ah, but it only takes back memories, not the person's consciousness themselves. Still, being able to bring back memories to the past is supposed to cause a time paradox. The King who sent back the memories shouldn't have had received the sent back memories after all. Which means the Queen's power probably intervenes with something like an alternate dimension.

Which means that from the point of view of the sender's world, this one is not the past but a 'what-if' world. ... but even so, I don't think the King and Queen would understand. The concept of an alternate dimension doesn't exist to begin with (even I only knew what I knew from SF stories). Aaaah, dammit, this isn't a simple sword-and-magic world isn't it?

While I was confused, the King sipped on his tea and took a breath.

"Really, ... the senders have it bad but we who received the message are troubled too. As feeling goes, it's like we spent the life where we made you prime minister, did something foolish, and turned back time. If we hadn't heard Elisha's explanation on the other side we would've thought it was as simple as turning back time. We haven't done a thing ourselves but it doesn't change the fact that a wrongdoing had been done to you. So in place of the 'other me,' we apologize. We are very sorry"

The King bowed his head deeply as he said that.

"Uhh, even if you apologize ... I don't really remember anything about it so ..."  
"We know ... it is just for our self-satisfaction. We wanted to apologize, please allow us"  
"... if you put it that way, I guess ..."

If they wanted to apologize, then I should probably let them. Of course, since things flew way over my head, I can't really empathize with him.

"So, in order to keep things from going like how it went in those memories, we turned the throne over to you. I suppose this answers your first and third questions"

The first question was 'why did you give the throne to someone you just met,' and the answer is that it wasn't our first meeting from the King's point of view (even though it technically *was* our first, this is complicated). The answer for the third, 'why won't you meet with me until now,' is that he was considering whether to tell me about this power or not. Also, to make sure that the future went a different way.

And the second, about Georg's loyalty ...

"Huh! No way, did you tell Georg about this!?"

“... We are a weak man. We are not strong enough to keep such a thing bottled down by ourself.”

Alberto gazed outside the window. The moon had gone behind a cloud at some point, making the sky gloomy.

“We didn’t think it was possible for us to bring about a different future on our own. We bared everything to the country’s most trustworthy man, Army General Georg Carmine, and asked for his cooperation. Then we came up with a plan to eradicate the unjust nobles who were going to become your enemies. Castor’s being suspicious was an oversight of ours, but the plan had already gone underway, so we could not divulge the plan and caused you anguish. We beg your pardon”

So that’s that about Georg’s rebellion drama, in order to round up all my would-be enemies in one place and eliminate them along with himself. Coupled with Hakuya’s and my plan to hold down the Amidonians, it really became a really big stage, huh. Roroa also played her own script. Really a stage with many scriptwriters (Me, Hakuya, Georg, Roroa, and also Lord Alberto ... that’s a lot).

I tried to make people dance but I was dancing on strings all along. I thought I was clearing a path for myself but I was running on safe rails. ... this is, well

“Somehow ... I feel like losing confidence”

“Not at all. Practically speaking, you managed to reach a different future from then. You merged Amidonia and rebuilt this dying country into the Kingdom of Friedonia. I feel that I did the right thing in handing you the throne”

“I’m happy that you said so ... but, where did it the future actually start to change?”

“From the start. This time around, Liscia was by your side from the start”

“Liscia?”

Well sure, Liscia was supporting me by my side from the start, but why is her name coming up now? Then, Alberto’s face looked a little sad.

In the future where you were Prime Minister, Liscia was also by your side. She was Georg’s secretary, so you knew each other through him. That world’s Liscia also recognized your talent and fell for you. Even after you were discharged, she would come right to me to ask me to recant your dismissal. However ... the me of

that time did not listen to Liscia's advice, and she sorrowfully returned to Randell where you were. To Randell that went up in flames because of the nobles. Probably ... in the end ..."

Liscia ... died together with me. He did mention that he 'lost everything' earlier. So he meant losing his beloved daughter by that.

"And what about the other allies I promoted?"

"They weren't there. You didn't use the Royal Broadcast in that world. We followed the advice of those who wanted to keep with tradition and didn't let you use it. Therefore the personnel gathering and your broadcast programme thing never happened"

I see ... now that I think back to it. Most of our members came from the personnel gathering using the Royal Broadcast. Without it I would've never met with Aisha, Hakuya, Tomoe, and Poncho. Also, as a Prime Minister Excel would've never sent me Juna, and I wouldn't have met with Ludwin, Halberd, and Kaede in the military, either. Which means that it was a huge turning point.

And the strongest backing for using the Royal Broadcast was the throne I was given and the engagement with Liscia that provided legitimacy for it. If it weren't for those, I probably wouldn't have been able to silence those who oppose the use of the Royal Broadcast. Thinking about it that way ...

"... Holy. Liscia's starting to sound like the goddess of victory here"

"Please do cherish her"

"Of course I would"

The goddess who won't abandon me even in adversity. If I didn't cherish her I'd have brought divine wrath upon myself. Lord Alberto then stood up.

"Now then, we've told you everything we know. With this, our role is truly over. The rest ... is now up to all of you"

As he said so, Lord Alberto stood next to Lady Elisha and wrapped his arm around her shoulders.

"We are thinking of leaving this castle and live a quiet life in our old territory"

"What! Why?"

"Having the former King around is going to invite unnecessary trouble. This is

also something we have decided from the start, to step off the stage after making sure the future had changed”

What I saw there was not the face of an unreliable King, but one of a loving father watching over his children. Is that face ... meant for me?

“I suppose you’ve already made your decision”

“We believe we could leave Liscia and the country in your hands. Both Elisha and ourself. We’ll be counting on you, ‘our son’”

I stood up and thumped my fist on my chest.

“... Understood, Lord Father”

We nodded to each other. Lady Elisha watched over everything with a smile. I went to leave the room but stopped and looked back as I was about to approach the door.

“There is one last thing I wanted to ask”

“What is it?”

“Um, in the world where I was Prime Minister, did you ever find Liscia’s and my body?”

“... no, we did say that you became ashes scattered in the wind, did we not? Not a single speck remained”

I see. So they never found my body. In that case ...

“Then it could be possible that Liscia and I might have survived”

“What!?”

“I would’ve died if I were on my own, but Liscia was there with me, right? If the me over there cared for Liscia as much as I do here, then I would never have let Liscia die without doing anything about it. Though disgraceful, I would’ve taken Liscia and ran away. It’s possible that we might have been attacked by enemy troops while doing so, but in that case then they’d surely have our bodies. Since they didn’t, that means we might have managed to escape.”

It’s also possible that Georg used himself as bait in order to buy us time to do that ... well, that’s like believing in some Yoshitsune survival theory. But isn’t it alright? If it meant easing this father in law of mine’s guilt a little bit.

“... Thank you, son”

Those words reached me as I stepped out of the room.



“What do you think you’re doing all the way out here?”

I was on the government office terrace, watching the castle town’s night scene, when Liscia came to me with a blanket.

“You found me out, huh”

“Hakuya told me. Everyone’s busy preparing for the singing contest you know?”

“... sorry. Let me stay here for a little longer please”

“Mou ... then at least dress yourself a little warmer”

As she was saying that, Liscia put the blanket she brought over me and slipped herself inside. The warmth of her body coming in contact with me felt really good.

“Phew ... Yeah, it’s really cold outside this late”

“Well of course, it’s winter”

“Ah, it’s snowing”

“Woah, it really is”

When I realized, snow had already began falling from the heavy clouds. Powdery at first, then gradually turning into large fluttering flakes of snow. The snow falling in the darkness and the lights from the castle town was a wondrous sight to see.

“It’s beautiful”

Liscia muttered beside me. I watched her face in profile as she stood there enraptured. Unable to hold myself, I got out from the blanket and drew her into my embrace, blanket and all.

“Wha, Soma!?”

“... actually ...”

I should’ve been cold, but my face, my body, for some strange reason, felt warm.

“Actually ... there’s something I have to say to you before Aisha, before Juna, before Roroa ...”

“ ... ”

“Liscia ... I love you. Will you marry me?”

“... Really. After all this time”

As she said that, Liscia smiled, embarrassed, like she was ticklish. She then gently pushed away from my embrace and put her hands on my chest, slowly bringing her face close.

“Yes. I love you too, Soma”

Our lips met together. It was right at midnight, the 32<sup>nd</sup> day of the 12<sup>th</sup> month (New Year’s eve).

We remained that way for a while, listening to the coming of the new year.

# Credits

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